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Yours Truly,
Atticus G. Haygood.

OUR CHILDREN.

BY

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PRESIDENT OF EMORY COLLEGE.

"Feed my lambs."—John xxi, 15.

SEVENTH THOUSAND.

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DEDICATION.

To my Mother, and the memory of my Father,

Who did all they could to obey that Scripture which saith, "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up," this book is gratefully
dedicated by

THE AUTHOR.

OXFORD, GA., Jan. 1, 1876



INTRODUCTION.

AN introduction to a book is as necessary as to a party. By it the reader learns in advance what will be his fare. But introductions, we are sorry to believe, are seldom read, and readers, not being properly introduced, set in to read, and, failing to be entranced at the outset, lay the book by and never read it at all. Therefore, no matter how rich the intellectual fare may be, the reader, tired too soon, never tastes it.

I have consented to write this introduction at the request of the author. His name itself is enough, considering his long, late, and successful connection with our Sunday-school literature. From this relation to the Church and to the children of the country, no doubt, came the inspiration of the book I hereby introduce to the reading public. This needed book, on account of its intrinsic merit and the importance of its subject-matter, I recommend every one interested in the future generations of our noble race to buy, read, study, practice, and circulate.

There are many subjects on which good books might be written. But the subject on which this book treats ranks them all in point of vital interest and grand results. An introduction to a book does well to sketch its contents, but, for good reasons, I prefer to lay down a grand postulate of my own, comprising in it the substance, if not the sum, of the book itself. It is a work setting forth the philosophy of good, religious family

government and education—what we might call the Christian theory of childhood. That in all this there is room for sound philosophy, and great need of it, all wise administrators in this little realm will readily allow; therefore, this forth-coming book should be hailed as a welcome contribution to the literature now most needed. For unless our children can be rightly reared for both earth and heaven, domestic life, in so far as children are involved, is only an altar on which to offer up souls in sacrifice to the lusts of pleasure and fashion. Among the many assignable causes of the desolations of sin, there is not another—not even the Leviathan of intemperance—that has opened so wide an outlet of souls from God and heaven as bad, irreligious family government and its consequences. Minds and hearts spoiled in the nursery can rarely be mended in the sanctuary. Wherefore, the rule of prevention, as given us by Solomon—writing as the amanuensis of the Holy Spirit, and not merely as a practical philosopher—is: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”

I believe this declaration to be absolute in its sense, and feel no little shocked when I hear slack-twisted parents, whose children are departing from the right way, alleging that this very special text was never intended to guarantee any thing more than a degree of general good luck. Nay, verily, brethren, it intends insurance against all the evils that occur in consequence of failure in right training. If it does not, it furnishes no insurance at all, nor any ground of faith on which parents can rest their confidence in right training. Unless there is in it divine security—unless right training so changes the chances of a child's conversion from possibility to certainty as to amount to assurance, I cannot see the divine reason for its incorporation into the law

of practical godliness in the machinery of revealed religion. But in all these platforms for human action there is always a marked specialty. Here it is contained in the words "in the way in which he should go." There are many parents who train their children rather in the way they choose for them than in the way they should go. These errors in training lead to habitual divergencies from the laws and principles of spiritual piety; and when their personal subordination to the requirements of self-denial should lead them to walk after the Spirit, and not after the flesh, they are found to be obstinately insubordinate. They are, however, walking in the way wherein they were trained to go, and the reason why they cannot be made to walk in the narrow path of life is because they were inadvertently trained to walk in the broader way of the world. The mother trained her daughter to look upon her fortunes here as depending more on enslavement to popular fashion in dress, than upon noble self-denial of superfluities for the more liberal endowment of Christ's treasury for his poor. The father so trained his son as to make him feel that eating his bread by the sweat of his face was to lower his position in life, from the grade of a gentleman to that of a peasant, and the outworking of these unhallowed lusts so demoralized the inward springs of Christian heroism that ere he was aware of it his son was a fashionable loafer, living upon the prestige of his family name, without any self-earned reputation, either of business merit or moral goodness. And in all of these mournful issues it will be found on examination that the outlet from God and moral insurance for our children was in the adoption of rules of living originated in worldly policies irrespective of God's word, as the only law of living from which parents can learn how to train their children in the way they should go. And any other training is a forfeiture of the charter.

It is noteworthy that the only order ever issued from the fountain of all moral authority, on the subject of education, was in these words :—

“And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart : and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”

How strikingly simple, and yet how specially minute, this divine order is ! These four conditions in domestic life leave no unfilled space. And I doubtless say no more than is true when I say, Solomon’s training up of children in the way they should go, was in this way.

The Spirit of inspiration has but one way in carrying out any one of the specified duties of revealed religion. The two conditions in domestic life, called lying down and rising up, cannot mean any thing else than family worship. And no one pretending to religion would ever presume to say he had trained his children in the way in which they should go, if he had trained them, by example, to live and raise up children without morning and evening prayer. This original order for family religion and family instruction is more especially specified by the prophet Isaiah, both as to age and manner, when he asks : “Whom shall he teach knowledge ? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine ? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breast.”

This doubtless means that this work is to be begun from infancy. Hence he says, “For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept ; line upon line, line upon line ; here a little and there a little.” This is exactly what was commanded by Moses in another form.

This instruction must be repeated until these pupils

understand doctrine. This is exactly what Lois and Eunice did to Timothy. They drilled him in this way, until from childhood he knew the Holy Scriptures, which were able to "make him wise unto salvation, through faith which was in Christ Jesus."

Thus they made Timothy understand doctrine. And if it was possible with him, it is possible with all children under like circumstances. The business of all Christian parents is in this way to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. Timothy was so made ready and prepared for the Lord, and that, too, by his grandmother and mother, while it is likely that his father was even opposed to it, as he was a Greek. Let Christian mothers, who unfortunately may have irreligious husbands, take encouragement. The charm of a pious mother is often too mighty for the evil influence of an ungodly father's example.

But we are doing what we can to bring about a better state of things. I have said that children spoiled in the nursery can seldom be mended in the sanctuary. And it is equally true of them, that if they are well-molded in the nursery, and well-finished in the Sunday-school, it is hard to spoil them afterward. But it can be done by "evil communications." Keep children under the same influences that gave them their first religious impulses. If they are sent off to school or college for education, send them where their faith will be best nurtured.

The author of the book I hereby introduce, the Rev. Dr. Haygood, although young, has had more than five years of official relation to the wants and interests of children, having been, at two successive General Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, elected Sunday-school Secretary and editor of Sunday-school books and periodicals.

From a well-stored mind and an anxious heart he offers, in this work, his observations and experience upon the best interests of our children for time and eternity, upon the obligations and duties of parents, and upon the opportunities and work of Sunday-school teachers. The principles—drawn as they are from the word of God—that are set forth in this volume are like the mariner's chart and compass—all important to safe navigation along the perilous coast of life.

We copy from the Bible—"be not faithless, but believing;" and sing, as we used to do, of Bible sailors:—

"The Bible is my chart and compass too,
Whose needle points forever true."

L. PIERCE.

SUNSHINE, *January 19, 1876.*

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OUR CHILDREN.

PART I. THE FAMILY.

CHAPTER I. CHILDHOOD.

THE significance of the birth and childhood of a human being the world has been slow to learn. Lycurgus, iron-hearted lawgiver of Lacedæmon, understood but one thing of a male infant—it might make a soldier. The old Spartan theory made the State every thing, the individual nothing. The individual citizen was nothing, except as his welfare or ruin affected the general interests. Hence that heartless code which required that delicate or deformed children should be “exposed”—abandoned to wild beasts, or in some other fashion be put out of the way. “The great aim of the government,” says Bojesen, “was to form, by means of education, a race of citizens whose bodily strength and powers of endurance, united to moral vigor and public spirit, would be a security for their performing efficiently the duties which it required. From

their infancy children, especially boys, were looked upon as the property of the State. As soon as they were born they were examined by the elders of their father's *phyle*, for the purpose of ascertaining that they had no bodily infirmity or deformity, which might render it necessary to expose them. They were then left with their parents till their seventh year, when the State undertook their education, in order to accustom them to strict military discipline, and qualify them for the army."

There was a savage sort of consistency in all this; for the man was lost in the citizen—the family merged in the State. Hence, if a boy-baby could not make a soldier there was no use of him, and the best interests of the State required that he be put out of the way. Sparta was, perhaps, among the first of the ancient nations that undertook a system of compulsory education. She made that education as godless as might be, under a constitution that knew nothing but the State and the worth of the citizen as a producer or a fighter.

How inconceivable to us a code of laws and a state of society which counted it a virtue to expose to death weak or deformed children! What would we say if some member of our national Congress should propose to enact a code, like that of Lycurgus, for the doing away with deformed and sickly children, as the best means of improving the population of the country?

It is the word of God that proclaims the dignity of the individual man; that tells us that the man is more than the citizen; that teaches us that the State is nothing except as it fosters and develops the happiness and character of the individual man. And it is from the word of God that we learn the true significance of childhood.

How far removed from the code of Sparta is the law given to Israel: "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up!" If we would see the difference, contrast the Spartan elders inspecting a new-born babe to see if it would make a citizen and a scene recorded by the evangelists: "And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them."

In vain will we search antiquity for any such views of childhood as underlie the injunctions of

St. Paul: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. . . . And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Indeed, the Abrahamic covenant, with its solemn rite of circumcision, recognized the dedicated child in his individual relations to God. And the Scriptures can show us the true dignity and worth of individual man, they can declare to us the true significance of childhood, because they reveal to us the fatherhood of God. Jesus Christ *has* "shown us the Father;" and he alone teaches us the true worth of a human being—the true mystery and meaning of human birth and childhood.

We raise here this fundamental question: Why is this world peopled as it is? Why are men born, and not directly created? We cannot suppose that the Creator was shut up to this one method of peopling the earth. Adam and Eve were not born; "out of the dust of the ground" God could have created millions as easily as two. Angels are not born; fatherhood, motherhood, childhood, brotherhood are unknown terms and relations among them. There is no kinship among the angels. Surely God might, had he so chosen, have peopled our world with millions by a direct exertion of creative power. So he peopled heaven—and, as it seems, before the creation of man—with myriads of intelligent beings. Why are not men so created—millions of adult in-

dividuals, isolated and unrelated? But God created one pair—the man and the woman, the father and the mother of the human race. Wherefore? Such questions may not be fully answered, “For who hath known the mind of the Lord?”

But some things are plain enough to the eye of faith. We know that this method of peopling the world by generation and birth is, for all the ends of the creation of our race, the very best method that could have been adopted. Elsewise, some other had been found out. We know also that the Divine plans are adjusted to each other with infallible precision, and this, too, not merely for the first day of creation, with the then existing state of things, but for all days that were to come after, and in view of all possible contingencies. Nothing that transpired after the creation of angels or men took the all-wise God by surprise. The great schemes of providence and redemption were not suddenly improvised to meet and countervail an unexpected success on the part of the great enemy of God and man. The plans of God in creation, providence, and redemption, are now, and always have been, in perfect harmony. The creation of the entire universe, with all that it contains, was begun and finished in the clear foresight of all possible contingencies—that of the fall and the redemption of our race included. Dr. Bledsoe has well said in his “Theodicy:” “The plan of redemption was not an after-

thought, designed to remedy an evil which the eye of omniscience had not foreseen; it was formed in the counsels of Infinite Wisdom long before the foundations of the world. The atonement was made for man, it is true; but, in a still higher sense, man was made for the atonement. All things were made *for* Christ."

We will not be drawn aside into metaphysical discussions of such questions as, Why did God create beings that he foresaw would sin? We may well exclaim with the psalmist, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it." It does not in the least solve our perplexities to doubt or deny the Bible doctrine of the subject. The facts exist—man has been created and he has sinned. Moreover, his children are involved in his sin. The question may, perhaps, never in this world be fully answered, but one thing we know—and it is the knowledge that comes through faith—God created the world, and man, and the universe, as he did, because it was best to do so.

The difficulties that environ this subject are not peculiar to the Bible history of man and of the origin of sin; they inhere in the facts themselves. Sir William Hamilton says truly: "No difficulty emerges in theology, which had not previously emerged in philosophy." We may, in blind passion and unbelief, reject the Bible doctrine, but the facts remain—man has been created, he has been

created capable of propagating his race, he has sinned, and his posterity are involved in his fall.

At this point we may quote profitably a paragraph from Bishop Marvin's "Work of Christ:"—

"With respect to our depraved condition, as it results from our connection with the first transgressors, and the spiritual impotency for good therefrom resulting, I have several things to say.

"First. Our Creator has provided a second Adam, whose representative relation to us places us on a footing as advantageous as if we had never been involved in the fall.

"Secondly. The gracious influences of the cross so far countervail our depraved propensities as to make repentance and salvation possible to every man.

"Thirdly. I cannot suppose that the human family would have been permitted to multiply under the fatal influences of the fall, but for the counteracting agencies of the redemption."

As it seems to us, it is too plain for doubt, that God's plans provide for the present and eternal salvation of every individual of the race that he created, with the clear foresight of its fall, and that he created, nevertheless, because he had provided for its redemption. But these plans involved—man being what he is—in the very necessities of our nature, human co-operation, as a condition of ultimate and complete success.

The argument and the facts of our history lead

inevitably to this conclusion: human birth and childhood, and the discipline which these states and relations involve, furnish, of all others the best possible conditions for the salvation of our race. We should study the significance of birth and infancy and childhood—as well as all other great themes and questions that concern our race—in the light of their relation to the eternal salvation of man: that is, in the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In Christ “all things consist.” There can be no theodicy where the God-man and his work are left out.

Now fallen angels make demons. Grown-up men, with fully developed passions, set on fire by sin, and without the restraint and discipline which, by the conditions of helplessness and dependence incident to infancy and childhood, come through parental care and government, would make moral monsters, frightful to contemplate, and, so far as we may judge, incapable of redemption.

Consider, for a moment, the condition of a newborn babe. What seeming contradictions are here! What possibilities are wrapped up in that tiny frame and undeveloped mind! That little hand may some day wield the scepter of an empire; it is now nerveless and impotent. That tongue may some day move multitudes by its eloquence; it is now voiceless. That mind may some day master great problems—learning much of God, his word, and his works; it is now ignorant of the simplest

truths. Weak and pitiful thing, for a whole year it cannot walk alone, or lisp the name of its mother. It is the most helpless of all young things, and for a longer period. For many years it depends for its daily support upon parental care. Few children under twelve years and dependent on their own exertions could maintain their existence. In the life of a mere animal a few months may terminate its dependent relations. And this to the young creature brings no loss or danger; it has little to learn; instinct supplies the lack of education. The lower down we go in the scale of being, the less is this dependence until at last it seems to cease altogether. If we search among the oyster beds, we shall find no traceable parental care or infantile dependence—only little points of life adhering to the rocks and fed by the waves.

But it is very different when God sets about making a man. It was very different at the beginning: "And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind. . . . And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good." And "good" they were, "after their kind." These things he simply "created." Not so did he "make man." "And God said, Let us make man in our

image, after our likeness. . . . So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."

The mere creatures never had God's image. Man had it and by sin lost it. And now, in the great schemes of providence and redemption, God seeks to restore to man his lost glory. When a man—capable of God, though fallen, and entering upon an immortal existence—is to be brought up, many years of utter helplessness, of weakness and consequent dependence, are required.

The common law reckons us minors, and incapable of performing the full functions of independent citizenship, till we have lived twenty-one years. Why is this? Why are our children so long in reaching maturity? Why are they so long dependent upon our care and toil? Our answer is: that human parents, during this long period of helpless dependence, may have the best of all conceivable opportunities for beginning and perfecting that training in obedience and faith and love which is so essential to their salvation from sin.*

* Sometime after this chapter was written we found the following remarks in Dr. John Harris's "Patriarchy," which we beg to quote as confirmatory of our general argument :—

"Why can man have been invested subordinately with the prerogative of multiplying his own image, but in order that he might transform his offspring into the likeness of his Creator? . . . Striking and unique is that arrangement by which the human offspring are retained for so long a period in a state of susceptibility and of depend-

O, when will we learn the profound and awful significance of human birth and childhood! the solemn and tremendous responsibilities of human parenthood! Shame on the man called father, or the woman called mother, who can look in the face of a new-born baby and not be awed and thrilled with a sense of responsibilities which take hold on eternity! Its destiny is practically in their hands. None can take their place—none can do their work. They hold a key that others may not touch. None can get so close to the child. And whether they care or do not care—try or do not try—they leave their impress upon its character and destiny. It may be lost in spite of their care; it may be saved in spite of their sinful negligence; but they do—trying or not trying to do—something in shaping the child's character and destiny which others cannot do. We say it most reverently, and yet without

ence on parental care. The poet of ancient skepticism sang of this long period of infantine dependence as a state of supposed inferiority to the young of the brute creation. The Theban fable pictured men as starting full formed from the dragon's teeth which Cadmus had sown. Our first parents actually commenced life with this fullness of power. The animal speedily attains maturity, and becomes independent of parental care. There was, then, no inherent necessity why the young of the human parent should remain so many years a babe; a child and immature. Had the period of its dependence, however, been only as long as the brood remains with the parent bird, the endearing names of father and mother would have been empty sounds; little opportunity would have been afforded to them for the formation of its character; and one of the most pleasing illustrations of providential appointments would have been lost."

hesitation, the parents, for a long time, stand in the place of God to their child. They ought to be, they are if they are faithful, God's true and only vicars upon the earth.

The cross of Christ alone solves the hard questions which startle and perplex when we think upon man's creation—his sin and fall. The cross puts almost divine dignity upon fatherhood and motherhood. The cross makes the infant of a day an heir of eternity and an object of absorbing interest to the intelligences of both worlds. Would God that we knew what an opportunity for bringing our children to their Saviour their helpless infancy and dependent childhood give us! Their helplessness is complete, but it is not abject, for they are redeemed by the blood of Christ, and their dependence creates our opportunity for teaching them to know and love him.

How sublime a thing is such helplessness of infancy, such dependence of childhood! And how sacred is fatherhood and motherhood! Would God that we understood these things aright! Then, indeed, would "the hearts of the fathers be turned to their children."

When will we learn that to feed and clothe them simply, to give them education enough to push their way through the conflicts of threescore and ten years—to furnish them for this life only—that these are the least of all our duties to them!

CHAPTER II.

CHILDHOOD AND RELIGION.

WHEN is a child personally responsible? How old must a child be before it is capable of religion? We cannot answer in precise terms. The word of God does not propose or answer such questions. They are questions that should scarcely be asked at all, for they presuppose something mechanical and arbitrary about religion. The law of the land may require civil or military duty between certain ages—as eighteen and forty-five.

There is nothing unseemly in making fixed and arbitrary limits here. But suppose the Church should say: We will receive to the communion no child under twelve years of age? We feel that this would be arbitrary, and, therefore, out of harmony with the true spirit of religion. Would it help the matter to say ten or fourteen years instead of twelve? We know that it would not. There can be no such arbitrary “metes and bounds” in religion. Procrustean measures can have no place here.

But there are many vague notions and obstinate prejudices on this subject. How often do parents hesitate when their little children offer themselves for Church membership? Sometimes they say: “1

am afraid he is not old enough—let him wait till he knows what he is about.” Some say: “They ought not to be biased—let them wait till they can decide for themselves in matters of religion.” *

Attending an Annual Conference in Virginia once, a worthy brother, who was a local preacher, sought an interview and asked our counsel. He was troubled about the case of his little boy, who had asked permission to join the Church.

The following is very nearly what passed between us:—

“Why do you hesitate, brother?”

“O, he is not old enough!”

“How old is he?”

“He is ten years old.”

“How do you know he is not old enough?”

“He don’t know enough to join the Church.”

“Don’t know what, brother?”

“Why, he don’t understand things; the rules of the Church and the doctrines.”

“Do you understand them, brother?”

* The following story of Coleridge is in point. A friend visiting him expressed the opinion that it was “very unfair to influence a child’s mind by inculcating opinions before it should come to years of discretion, so as to be able to choose for itself.” In reply to this absurd notion Coleridge says: “I showed him my garden, and told him it was my botanical garden.” “How so?” said he; “it is covered with weeds.” “O,” I replied, “*that* is because it has not yet come to years of discretion and choice. The weeds, you see, have taken the liberty to grow, and I thought it unfair in me to prejudice the soil toward roses and strawberries.”

Well, not as well as I ought."

"Does what you *know* measure your fitness for Church membership?"

Our friend seemed greatly perplexed, but he thought not. Then we asked him about his boy again: "Let us see what your boy does know. Does he know that he is a sinner?"

"O, yes!"

"Does he know that he needs a Saviour, and that Jesus Christ is his Saviour?"

"I am sure of it," answered the local preacher.

"Then advise and encourage him to join the Church."

He promised to do so.

The age of the boy, as it seemed to us, had nothing to do with the question of his joining the Church. And as little, perhaps, had his technical knowledge of doctrine and discipline.

Very significant here, as elsewhere, is the silence of the Scriptures. There is nothing in the Bible that intimates that a child's age can, in any sense, become a condition of acceptance with God through Jesus Christ. Nor is there a word which would justify the Church in saying a child must be so old—say ten or twelve—before he can come to the communion. But, practically, the Church has seemed to make mere age one of the conditions precedent to admission to her fellowship. No particular age, as ten or twelve, has been agreed upon, and yet

there is often doubt and hesitation when children of this age and under offer themselves for membership. There is no settled opinion, no formulated doctrine on the subject, but what is, perhaps, more injurious, a deep-seated prejudice, a wide-spread sentiment, unfavorable to the reception of young children into the Church. Once or twice we have known a pastor to take the little ones by the hand—as if to soothe and satisfy them—as they came forward with grown-up sinners, and then leave their names off the register! Cruel wrong is this. And it is the assumption, often very thoughtlessly, of an awful responsibility.

Of late years the Church has made great and notable progress toward a right sentiment concerning the religious capabilities of children. We have heard a preacher say that he greatly desired to join the Church when he was eight years old. He had a deep sense of sin and of his need of a Saviour. But he saw that he was not wanted—he was discouraged—he was not reckoned old enough. He did not join the Church till he was fifteen—till his “feet had well-nigh slipped.” We heard him say once: “I shudder now when I remember the slippery places along which I walked and see how nearly I was lost!” Great was the grace that saved him. Alas! for the thousands that between eight and fifteen do slip and fall to rise no more!

What is at the bottom of this sentiment that chil-

dren should be so old before they join the Church? Is it not a lingering, half-conscious feeling or notion that knowledge and the doing of some meritorious thing are, somehow, a sort of condition of justification? But neither children nor men are justified on account of their knowing and their doing, but their believing. The condition of entering into spiritual life is not knowledge, but faith. It is nowhere said, He that knoweth such and such things—that understandeth such and such doctrines and rules of the Church, but “*he that believeth hath everlasting life.*” The jailer of Philippi, deeply convicted of sin, “fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” What answer did they give? Little enough did he know of doctrines and rules. There was not an article of religion he could repeat, explain, or prove. Our little Sunday-school children would have shamed his knowledge. The apostles said: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”

Some people talk of the “proper requirements for Church membership,” as if they thought there could be nothing after conversion and joining the Church! As if one of the chief functions and duties of the Church were not those of a true “nursing-mother,” to feed the infant disciples with “the sincere milk of the word,” that they “may grow thereby,” and to train them up in the “knowledge and love

of God!" To the jailer of Philippi Paul and Silas did, indeed, speak "the word of the Lord; and to all that were in his house." What he *then* needed to know—chiefly, no doubt, his need of a Saviour and the fullness of salvation through Jesus Christ—that they preached. But their first word was "Believe." "Justification by faith" is the doctrine of Christ and of the apostles; it is the corner-stone; nay, it is the very soul of Protestantism. And yet we talk of a child's "knowing what he is about," and "understanding the doctrines and the rules!" By all means let the child and man know what he is about; let him understand the doctrines and the rules. But there is deadly danger in introducing these knowledge tests and measures when our children stand knocking at the door of the Church. Such tests, if applied all round, would rule out some of the saintliest men and women who bless and grace the Church. He is not necessarily the fittest for Church membership who knows most about the Church—about rules and doctrines. In these matters the scribes and Pharisees, who heard and rejected our Lord's message, were well instructed.

This much seems clear: a child is old enough to come under religious influence—old enough to act upon religious principles—in a word, capable of religion as soon as it is old enough to know right from wrong. How soon may this be?

There are obviously great differences in the men-

tal and spiritual development of children. But most children, as we judge, know right from wrong, and respond in their consciences to the claims of God's word far sooner than many persons suppose. On this subject a passage from the "Church Messenger" is judicious and to the point:—

"Surely we ought not to doubt that as soon as a child is old enough to be a willful sinner, it is old enough to be a voluntary Christian. As soon as it is sufficiently old to choose the wrong, it is old enough to choose the right. If a child of seven years knows what it is to commit a sin, it knows what it is to be sorry for it, and to confess its sins to Jesus. No conscience is more tender than a little child's. No heart is more easily touched. As soon as a child can love its mother it can learn to love Jesus. As soon as it trusts its mother enough to swallow the unknown draught of medicine, it can trust Christ. As soon as it begins to obey a father's commands, it can obey its heavenly Father's commandments. Now these three things, love, trust, and obedience, are the very essence of religion. The love of Christ is the marrow and pith of true piety. Remember, too, that God's Spirit offers his supernatural aid in producing and confirming the converting work in our children's hearts."

We heard a father, on one occasion, relate the following incident concerning his child, a boy, at the time, not quite five years old:—

“Coming in from the street,” he said, “my little boy met me at the door. He was very muddy. I had noticed that the gutter in front of the house was nearly full of dirty water, that had been thrown on the street by some fire-engines that had been practicing close by. I asked, ‘How did you get so muddy, Johnny?’ He hesitated, colored slightly, and answered slowly and doubtfully, ‘Mother sent me to Mr. Butler’s and I fell in the ditch.’ I doubted whether he had told me the truth, but making it a rule never to teach my children to lie by accusing them when they may be innocent, I only said, ‘You must be more particular next time.’ There the matter dropped. After tea that evening, four or five hours having passed since our interview at the door, I went into a room to say my prayers. It was perfectly dark, but presently I heard the little boy gently open the door and say, ‘Pa-pa.’ I called him, and he came and crouched down by my chair. After my own prayer was ended—no one having intimated to the child a suspicion of his truthfulness—I began to pray in a low voice, ‘O good Lord, bless my dear little boy. Make him good, and help him to tell the truth always.’ As I said the words, slowly and solemnly, I felt the little boy quiver by my side. He began to sob, and in a moment jumped up and threw his arms about my neck. ‘O, pa-pa,’ he sobbed, ‘I *will* tell you the truth about getting my clothes muddy

I was playing in the ditch, and mother told me not to.'"

Now, what shall we say of this and of the thousands of similar cases that parents have observed? It is conscience—conscience quickened by the truth and by the Spirit of God. When Radford Crockett, who helped to murder an old man near Atlanta, Georgia, about twenty years ago, after making good his escape, came voluntarily and gave himself up to die, offering no defense, and only begging, as he sobbed out the words—while strong men in the crowded court-room wept and sobbed with him—the judge to give him all the time the law allowed that he might get ready for death, we all talked about the power of conscience, and faithful ministers followed him to his cell and preached unto him Jesus and the resurrection. And it was the same power that worked in the heart of the child, less than five years old, who had told, perhaps, his first falsehood—*conscience*. The child, as well as the man, needed a Saviour and was capable of religion. The child's father did preach Jesus to his penitent little one. And he was right.

CHAPTER III.

PREVENTION OF SIN AN INVALUABLE MERCY.

WE fall into many mistakes on this whole subject of the religion of childhood.

In the first place, we have a vague notion that there is no need of pressing the matter upon a child's attention—that there is plenty of time—that a child has not much to do with religion any way—that religion is a subject that chiefly concerns grown people—that a child is in no danger by delay in embracing Christ—that it will be as well, if not better, for the little ones to wait awhile. And some persons—surely on account of ignorance or inattention, and not, we trust, indifference—seem to attach very little importance to such efforts as children make to be religious. Sometimes we have heard the interest of a protracted meeting discounted by reflections upon the number of children that knelt for prayer, or offered themselves for membership in the Church. Surely such persons have not read, or considered, what our Lord Jesus has said: “At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say

unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

Critics may differ as much as they please about the exegesis of these weighty words, but their spirit is unmistakable, and we cannot read them aright without feeling that we commit a great sin, and expose ourselves to a great condemnation, when we hinder a little child that would come to Jesus. But it is mournfully true that sometimes we imitate the bad example of the unbelieving disciples who "rebuked" those who "brought young children to him, that he should touch them." Let us read and ponder the record that the evangelist has made at this place: "But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God."

How mischievous are our misty notions and blind prejudices! We ought to press the subject of religion upon the attention of our children. There is not plenty of time. (Children have much to

do with religion—as much as grown people have. Children are in great danger who delay embracing Christ. It is not, by any means, as well for a child to wait awhile; for he suffers, if not the loss of his soul, nevertheless an incalculable loss, by waiting.

The child is now capable of sin, and by that token we know that he is capable of religion also. He now needs Christ, and, therefore, Christ is now able and willing to save him. For “the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost.” Children are born with depraved natures; they must have new hearts to become children of God in Christ Jesus. They must be pardoned and regenerated.* Sin is one in its essential character in grown people and in children. There is but one way as there is but one Saviour. To become “heirs of God” they must be made “children of God.” To become “children of God” they must be “created anew in Christ Jesus”—must be “transformed by the renewing of their mind.” They must be “born again”—“born of the Spirit,” “born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” And the sooner the better for the child, for the good of men, and for the glory of God.

* *How* God saves *infants* concerns us little. We know they are saved, although it has pleased him to tell us little about the *mode* of their salvation; assured, however, that they are so saved as to enter heaven with the Christly, and not with the Adamic, nature — *Go or Send.*

It is, indeed, a blessed and glorious work of grace when some great sinner of "the giants, of the sons of Anak," is brought to the feet of Jesus; but in every view of the case it would be better that the little sins of children should never develop into the great sins of desperate and hardened sinners. The story of the prodigal, redeemed from the wretchedness of an outcast swineherd to the blessedness of sonship and home, is enough to move the heart of a demon; but it had been better and more beautiful, and more pleasing to God, that the son should never have become a reprobate.*

"Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid!"

The child whose sound conversion is delayed—by his own willfulness, or by the mistakes or indifference or unbelief of friends—even though he may afterward be regenerated and be saved, suffers an incalculable loss by the delay. To keep men out of hell is not the chief end or glory of the salvation that Jesus Christ has brought into the world, but rather to *save them from sin*, and to make them unfit for such a place as hell and for such companionship as that of the lost.

Saul of Tarsus was a great sinner, and, by the grace of God, he became a great saint; but his sins

* The elder brother does not show what the younger ought to have been. His self-satisfied Pharisaism was itself a "going away" from God and from true "holiness."

did not help to make him a saint. He had been a greater saint had he not been so great a sinner. Persecution of the saints made no contribution to the development of his piety. True, he burst forth into irrepressible and grateful songs whenever he thought of the infinite mercy that was showed to him. Truly and thankfully did he say: "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." But if he had embraced Christ before that day of blood and darkness, when he "stood by" to sanction the murder of "His first martyr, St. Stephen"—to have been saved from the commission of such a sin would have tuned his heart to songs as grateful as those which celebrate his pardon. Do we not think too little of this—the blessedness of being saved from the commission of great sins? We do not discount the riches of Divine grace—the power of God's spirit in changing the heart of Saul of Tarsus, but we must think it had been unspeakably better for the great apostle never to have blasphemed the name of Jesus, never to have "persecuted" his saints, "even unto strange cities."

David felt this when God's preventing grace, through the instrumentality of wise and gentle Abigail, held back his hand from slaying the churlish Nabal. "And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou

which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand." Abigail was that day, indeed, the good angel of the hunted outlaw and anointed king. And such always are those wise children of God, whose "blessed advice" and blessed influence save us, by grace divine, from putting forth our rash hands to sin.

It is always better not to sin. Nothing in earth or heaven can make it better for a child to become a great sinner. Always and every-where sin is an infinite evil. Its prevention should inspire our loftiest zeal and command our deepest gratitude. Once more we say, Paul had been a greater saint had he not been so great a sinner. This may be gainsaid and misunderstood, but it is to us a truth—deeply and inexpugnably fixed in mind, and heart, and conscience. And we believe that God's word, and sound reason, and universal observation and experience, prove, illustrate, and confirm the opinion to be the truth.

The soul that is early saved from sin—if it only be fed and nurtured aright—must grow up into a fairer and more symmetrical character than the soul that continues long in rebellion, and that bears, perhaps always, the scars of its old wounds. There is a volume of meaning in the title of one of Dr. South's sermons: "*The Prevention of Sin an Invaluable Mercy.*" One paragraph we may quote:—

Every commission of sin introduces into the soul a certain degree of hardness, and an aptness to continue in that sin. It is a known maxim, that it is much more difficult to throw out than to let in. Every degree of entrance is a degree of possession. Sin taken into the soul is like a liquor poured into a vessel; so much of it as it fills it also seasons. The touch and tincture go together. So that, although the body of the liquor should be poured out again, yet still it leaves that tang behind it which makes the vessel fitter for that than any other. In like manner every act of sin strangely transforms and works over the soul to its own likeness: sin in this being to the soul like fire to combustible matter; it assimilates before it destroys it. . . . And every commission of sin imprints upon the soul a further disposition and proneness to sins: as the second, third, and fourth degrees of heat are more easily introduced than the first. Every one is both a preparative and a step to the next. Drinking both quenches the present thirst and provokes it for the future. When the soul is beaten from its first station, and the mounds and outworks of virtue are once broken down, it becomes quite another thing from what it was before. In one single eating of the forbidden fruit, when the act is over, yet the relish remains; and the remembrance of the first repast is an easy allurements to the second. One visit is enough to begin an acquaintance; and this point is gained by it, that when the visitant comes again he is no more a stranger.

Who that knows himself, or that is an observer of others, can doubt that the *habit* of sin, acquired previous to conversion, itself constitutes a danger? Apostasy generally takes place in the line of the old habits that in the days of sin, dug themselves deep channels through mind and heart and life. When a river, turned from its course, breaks out of its new channel, it returns to the old. Illustrations of

this truth will come trooping into the recollections of every experienced and observant pastor. It is a sort of military axiom that "the strength of a fortification is the strength of its weakest point." How many mature Christians feel this most keenly! Although they are strong in the Christian virtues, they bitterly lament their weakness in resisting the evil tendencies that the old habits of sin set in motion.

From how many bitter and unavailing regrets will early conversion save our children! Paul never alluded to his old life of sin without unutterable sorrow, nor can any good man gloat over the scenes of his early wickedness. How sorrowful to recall opportunities wasted, privileges perverted, grace despised, goodness contemned! How sad to think that we ever did, or could, through the dark days of rebellion, treat such a Saviour as Jesus is so unlovingly as to sin against him!

And who shall recall for us the evil influence of the days of evil? Who shall undo the ruin of souls, blighted by the evil influence of him who served sin and Satan before he turned to God?

Read the history of Manasseh, king of Israel, the wicked son of the good Hezekiah. He "wrought uncleanness with greediness," committing all manner of sin. Late in life, under the heavy hand of an avenging Providence, "he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers." Infinite was the mercy that

heard and accepted such a sinner. But Manasseh's pardon and Manasseh's salvation could not undo the evil that he had already done. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, went down to hell, as the result of his false doctrines and wicked ways, even before his repentance and pardon. Nor did his repentance and pardon stop the long procession of rebellious ones—full of sin and doomed to death—that kept marching on and down to their fate.

When a man launches a false word upon the stream of time it is gone from him forever. He cannot recall it. When a man commits a sin it goes forth from him; it may be pardoned, it cannot be recalled. The sinner, through God's great mercy, may be saved from the doom he deserves, but his sin goes on forever, propagating itself in other souls. O, who shall tell us how far, how wide, how deep, the leaven of sin and death will work!

After Manasseh's repentance and conversion he exerted himself to undo the evil that he had done. His success was small. He did, indeed, "take away the strange gods, and the idol out of the house of the Lord." He tried hard to arrest the downward course of the nation, and to make some atonement for the ruin he had brought on his people. He not only cast the implements of idolatry out of the city of Jerusalem, but "he repaired the altar of the Lord, and sacrificed thereon peace-offerings and thank-offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the

Lord God of Israel.' Alas! Judah had learned from him to disobey God, and to give herself to idols. There was a partial and temporary reformation, but the tide was only held in check; Manasseh could not turn it back. The brief arrest of the flood seemed only to gather the waters for their final plunge. When one cuts the dikes and lets in the sea, wailings, and lamentations, and wringing of hands, will not drive back the waves.

Sad as a tragedy in which all the actors die, is the closing record of the reign of Manasseh and his son. Thicker and blacker grew the shadows as the night of ruin settled down upon his house. "Amon was two and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned two years in Jerusalem. But he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, as did Manasseh his father: for Amon sacrificed unto all the carved images which Manasseh his father had made, and served them; and humbled not himself before the Lord, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself; but Amon trespassed more and more. And his servants conspired against him, and slew him in his own house."

Very sad is the sight of this old man trying in vain to undo the evil he had done. Retribution followed his sin. He was saved by the infinite mercy that heard and accepted his penitential tears and prayers. But bitter regrets followed him to his grave. Ghostly forms stood about him, reminding

him of the souls he had destroyed. Will Manasseh not lament these undone souls forever? How true is that Scripture which saith: "If fire break out, and catch in thorns, so that the stacks of corn, or the standing corn, or the field be consumed therewith, he that kindled the fire shall surely make restitution."

We knew a preacher—a man of genius, and power, and deep devotion. He was once a great sinner. He never mentioned his old life except to deplore his sins, and to magnify the mercy of God. On one occasion, referring to his great and merciful deliverance, he thought of the evil he had done before his repentance and conversion. He paused a moment, and then with a sobbing cry that would have moved a stone, he said, "But I am afraid there are souls in hell that I sent there!" And then, while the tears streamed down his face, he cried, "O Jesus, Jesus, tell them how sorry I am, how sorry I am!"

Would God that we knew that the "prevention of sin is an invaluable mercy!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE ENLIGHTENING AND QUICKENING SPIRIT.

WE have seen how easily, we might say how naturally, we fall in with the notion that a child, in order to embrace Christ, must know so much of “doctrines and rules,” and such things. Even in the case of a little child, we seem to hesitate to take Christ and the blessing of his Gospel by faith. There are thousands like the local preacher mentioned before, who cling to the notion that a child should “know the doctrines and the rules, and so forth.” Certainly these things should be known, but not as a condition of his coming to Christ.

In this connection another prevalent and hurtful error may be mentioned: We seem to think that religious knowledge is like other knowledge, or even more difficult to attain. Parents will have their children study arithmetic, and geography, and grammar, and such things, and still talk about their being too young to know enough to join the Church or to be religious. But it is far otherwise; religious truth is more easily learned by a child than mathematical or other scientific truth. In a most important sense religious truth is more normal to the

mind of a child. God has adjusted the word of the kingdom to human nature so perfectly, that as soon as a child can understand any thing, it can understand, partially at least, and sufficiently for its personal salvation, the rudimentary truths of religion. And herein we find one of the most convincing and irresistible evidences of the Divine origin of the Gospel—its perfect adaptedness to our nature. God, who made the light for the eye and the eye for the light, has assuredly adjusted the Gospel to the soul of man. It is adapted to his condition, and it meets all his wants. It is impossible, as it seems to us, that one, who understands both man and the Gospel, can doubt that He who made man gave him the Gospel. Fallen, though he is, man has more susceptibility, if we may so express it, to the knowledge of God than to any other form of knowledge. And this should not surprise us, since the whole remedial scheme was designed for fallen man. It is not a Gospel for unfallen and innocent, but for fallen and sinful intelligences. Jesus himself said, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." It is very clear, as it seems to us, that it is as natural that a child should apprehend a Gospel truth as that he should hear or breathe.

But, after all, it is not mere knowledge—it is somewhat like intuition. Dr. John Brown, of Edinburgh, says, in one of his lectures on "The Sayings and Discourses of our Lord," "The New Testament

has an answering witness in every man's conscience." Yes, and in every child's conscience. If one is teaching a child a rule in grammar, or arithmetic, there is need of tedious and repeated explanations, and, generally, when it is learned, it is, at first, and, for the most part, for a long time after, only lodged in the memory, to be understood, by and by, when the reflective faculties begin to develop. But when a child is told that it ought to be good, to obey its parents, to speak the truth, to fear God, and to pray, as soon as it can understand what you say, it understands what you mean. What it has learned is more than something simply remembered, it is something known.

The five-year-old boy, mentioned in a preceding chapter, had as distinct a sense of the obligation to speak the truth as his father had. The religious truth a little child may comprehend may be small, but what it knows, it *knows*. We firmly believe that a child's mind seizes upon, apprehends, and retains a religious truth more readily than any other truth. Explain to a child that he is a sinner; that he needs a Saviour; show him that Jesus is such a Saviour as he needs. Now bring the same truths before the mind of a man, and there is less difference between the knowledge of the child and the knowledge of the man than most persons are apt to suppose. The man may know more *about* sin and more *about* Christ than the child, but he does not,

as we think, know more clearly than the child the few things the child does know.

One reason we fail to recognize the adaptedness of the Gospel to a child's apprehension, and fail to see how easily and readily a child may learn elementary and saving religious truth, is that we do not know or estimate aright the work done by the Holy Spirit. There can be little question that in much of our thinking on the subject of the religious capabilities of children, we forget or undervalue the illuminating and quickening influences of the Holy Ghost.

How soon does the Spirit begin his work in the minds of little children? We do not know. We know that one child at least—John the Baptist, the son of holy Zacharias and Elizabeth—was “filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb.”

In him at least

“Prevenient grace descending,”

as Milton expresses it, went before the dawn of intelligence and prepared the way for the apprehension and belief and love of the truth.

And who knows but the same gracious Spirit now moves—silently, mysteriously it may be, but truly and efficaciously—upon the hearts of all our children from the very day that they are born? We do not affirm, for the word of God does not say. Yet, surely, no one can deny, for the word of God does not deny. May we not ask, with solemn reverence,

would it not be like our loving and compassionate Father to surround our little children with all holy influences from the very hour they enter upon their pilgrimage through the wilderness of this world? With what tenderness and anxious solicitude even earthly parents nurse and guard their helpless babes! But we do not—for we cannot—love them as God does. “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” And what “asking” is a little baby’s helplessness and need of divine protection, love, and preventing grace!

It may be that God has not informed us upon this subject, just as he has left us in ignorance of his mode of preparing an infant soul for heaven when he calls it out of this evil world unto himself, because this is a blessing that does not depend simply upon our co-operation, and that cannot be altogether hindered by our unbelief. We know that no wickedness in the parents can hinder God’s work in preparing the soul of their departing infant for the happiness of heaven. And, as we suppose, his preventing grace—while its ultimate results may be marred by parental unbelief and sin—cannot be altogether, at least, if at all, kept away from the soul of a little babe by a father’s or a mother’s wickedness.

Who will say that the sun’s rays are not warming

the earth, through all the long winter, although the grass does not grow, the flowers do not bloom, and the birds do not sing till the spring time comes? We do not value aright the power and blessing of a winter's sun. We look on the dreary landscape and the earth seems dead. But suppose that sun removed from his place. Then, indeed, would the winter of death come upon us; the ice would strike down into the heart of the earth, and the end would come. But when the spring does come, and

“ With one great gush of blossoms storms the world,”

and the summer and the autumn, with their green glories and ripening harvests, come on in their season, we know the power of the sun. But without the winter's sun, there would be no spring, nor summer, nor autumn time.

And what would youth or manhood be without the gracious prevenient work of the all-enlightening and quickening influences of the Holy Spirit? What a hopeless task it would be to teach the Gospel to a man who had never felt the influences of the Spirit of God! There is no such man; it is inconceivable that there should be. There are men who have “resisted,” and “grieved,” and “quenched” these divine influences, but there is no man who never felt them. And this agrees with experience. Missionaries have found that the truths of the Gospel are

as normal, so to speak, to the most debased heathen, as to the most civilized and enlightened nations.

Why should we doubt that the Holy Ghost moves upon the heart of a child long before our dull eyes can detect the signs of his presence? Do we not read that when "the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep," that "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters?" Afterward came the light and the life that manifested the creative wisdom and power of God. Once, at least, in the case of him, as we have seen, who was to "go before" and "prepare the way" of our Lord, the Holy Ghost did fill the heart of a child—and of a *fallen child of a fallen man*—from the very hour of its birth. Whether this be an exceptional case or not, one thing we know; the work of the Spirit, in the heart of John, was not arbitrary or capricious; it violated no law of the human constitution or of the divine government. Most certainly, as it seems to us, we are warranted, by all we can learn from the word of God, in praying that our little ones may receive "the gift of the Holy Ghost" from the day that they are born. What pious father or mother is there who does not pray, as soon as their children are born, that God would bless them? What do we mean by such prayers if the Holy Spirit may not "move upon" them, although their thoughts as yet may be "without form, and void."

Nor do we estimate aright the work of the Holy Spirit, as *teacher* of the truth of God, throughout the entire course of Christian growth and experiences.

The great promise of our Saviour, "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father shall send in my name, he shall teach you all things," is surely not to be confined to the twelve who were then listening to his valedictory discourse. This promise, in all its grace and fullness, is ours for all our needs, as it was theirs for all their needs. And little children, as truly as adult believers, may plead it and be glad in it.

What a grown man knows of God is not the result of his studies simply—is not the conclusion of his philosophy, nor the discovery of his reason. To know God truly we must be taught of God. "As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."

When we think on the natural depravity of our children, let us remember that the Spirit of God—‘quickening them that are dead in trespasses and in sins’—moves upon their hearts, as upon ours; when we think on their ignorance of spiritual things, and deplore—as it becomes us to do—our want of aptness in teaching them the “truth as it is in Jesus,” let us remember, for our encouragement, that the “Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost,” is their teacher as well as ours. How wise, how careful, how patient, how loving, and, if we may write such words of Him, how apt is this blessed Teacher of human souls, no tongue can tell. There are those who are called teachers among men who do their work carelessly when they instruct little children. But the wise and loving Spirit of God knows what a little child is—its great worth and its many needs.

During the summer of 1875 we had a long conversation with a very saintly woman—whose husband was like-minded with her—about her son, an only child. He is now a man, and himself a Christian teacher of children. We had known him when he was a school-boy, and he had always seemed to us singularly pure in word and deed. We learned the secret of his early maturity in religion, and of his consistent and beautiful religious character. God had given them only this one child, and from his birth their prayer had been, not merely that God

would spare his life, but that he might be kept from sin. Their prayer was full of the spirit of Christ: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest *keep them from the evil.*" Neither his "grandmother Lois," nor "his mother Eunice," were more prayerful, or careful in teaching the way of righteousness to young Timothy, than were our friends in bringing up their son "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." They dedicated him most solemnly to God, and God's blessing upon him they supplicated day by day. Above all, they prayed for the presence and influences of the Holy Ghost, that he might be sanctified from his birth. And, so far as we can see, their prayer was heard. Is it any wonder that their boy in his early childhood—when barely beyond the period of infancy—gave his young and willing heart to God? that he has, since that early consecration of himself, run joyfully in the way of God's commandments? that he was saved from the crimes that so often blight the bloom and promise of boyhood? Is it any wonder that, in answer to such prayers and in co-operation with such parental love and fidelity, the Holy Ghost "was given"—that the "fruit of the Spirit" did appear in early childhood, or that now, in manhood's prime, they go on multiplying and maturing to the glory of God's grace? that he is a "crown of honor" to his parents, a joy and a blessing to a large circle of friends?

“Lord, we believe ; help thou our unbelief !” For our children also, may we believe and pray for “the promise of the Father ;” open wide our own hearts to his blessed visitation ; and joyfully, “as workers together with Him,” “bring our young children to Jesus, that he may touch them !”

CHAPTER V.

ON MERE ABILITY TO TALK RELIGION.

OF TENTIMES we pass hasty and unjust judgments upon youthful Christians. Sometimes a child's religious knowledge and experience are discounted in our minds because his power of expression is limited. He tells what he knows and feels imperfectly and with difficulty. His simple speech is an offense to the precision of orthodoxy and the pride of pedantry. But there is no greater mistake of the kind than that as "words are the signs of ideas," there will necessarily be words where there are ideas, or that there are no ideas where there are no words. As if words were the only signs of ideas—the only instruments of expression!

The wisest and most cultured men have many thoughts for which they can find no adequate expression. The best songs have not been sung, except in meek and lowly hearts, by inaudible voices, and to the minstrelsy of unseen harps. The noblest thoughts that stir man's heart cannot find utterance. The great sculptor Thorwaldsen, it is said, was once seen contemplating through sad tears a statue of the child Jesus, which he had just completed. His pupils, standing by, asked the cause

of his depression. He answered with deep sorrow in his tones :—

“ I shall never have another great thought.”

“ What do you mean, master?” they cried in a breath. His answer contains a true philosophy.

“ Up to this time my conception of what a work of art ought to be, has been far beyond my power of execution in the work itself. *This statue satisfies me.*”

And Thorwaldsen was right—his power of conception was already in its decadence. It is a sad thing to see a man satisfied with any thing that he has done—a song he has sung, a picture he has painted, a statue he has carved, a book he has written, a sermon he has preached, a duty he has performed, a life he has lived. Such satisfaction is the token of decadence and the forerunner of death. Adequate expression never comes for some thoughts, for some emotions, for some aspirations. The nobler the thoughts, the purer and deeper the emotions, the loftier and diviner the aspirations, the greater the difficulty of expression. “ Words ” are the “ signs ” of ideas, but they are only signs—mere symbols of the greater things they cannot reveal. Who, that by some noble thought or generous sentiment has been lifted above himself, has not felt all this? And there are some rare moments when we feel that speech is an impertinence. When we stand upon the highest Pisgahs and the Sun of Truth

pours down his beams, and all the landscape—with bright streams, and green fields, and shaded woods, and distant mountains—shines before us and startles and subdues like a new revelation in the manifesting light, we feel that silence is a necessity.

On one occasion, many years ago, a gifted preacher, the great and good Lovick Pierce—who still abides with the Church, saintly and venerable, honored in all the gates of Zion, wise as Nestor and loving as St. John—was discoursing on one of the grand themes of the Gospel. The Spirit of power was upon him. “The skin of his face shone” as if he had just descended from some mountain of glorious vision. Intellect and feeling were at their highest and most confluent tides that day. Head and heart worked together. Argument and passion fused and coalesced. He carried his congregation with him. Farther and farther they moved from the shore, till at last they tided over the bar and were fairly out at sea. And how wide, how deep is the sea! And then the preacher paused, as if feeling carefully with his longest sounding line for the bottom, so far out of sight. But in vain. He only felt the tug and undertow of mighty tides deep down in the sea. And then he cried, lifting his face with a look of rapture: “Glory be to God! I can find no bottom!”

We often find the great apostle himself struggling hopelessly to find utterance for the mighty thoughts that swelled his heart with joys unuttera-

ble. When he had completed his inspired argument in the Epistle to the Romans, setting forth, in words chosen by the Spirit, man's ruin by sin and his redemption by Christ, as one vision after another of God's greatness and goodness rose before his faith, he could only exclaim in the fullness of his holy joy, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!"

Many times have we heard, in love-feasts and experience meetings, from simple people, a word that indicated far more than it expressed, accompanied, it may be, with a look or gesture that spoke unutterable things.

One scene we recall. We were standing in the pulpit with the now sainted Dr. A. L. P. Green, at a camp-meeting near Columbia, Tennessee, in the autumn of 1871. It was an hour of holy joy, for the Church had won a great victory that day. Sinners had been converted and saints had been made happy in God. They were singing a camp-meeting hymn, in which we joined as well as we were able. Right before the pulpit stood a little old man whom we had observed, in the morning, as one of the homeliest men we had ever seen. He was dwarfed in stature, and his face had been sadly marred by disease and age. Dr. Green called our attention to the man. He was not the same man now. The joy of grace filled his heart, and shone with strange bright-

ness through his face. "He was transfigured before us." Now he seemed beautiful to our eyes. His eyes filled with tears, and his voice, rich with heavenly gladness, spoke to our hearts things that were unspeakable and full of glory.

And children—very little children—sometimes have these thoughts, that reach out toward things infinite and eternal.

We have heard one of our bishops tell of his child-experience in religion. Even he, with all his gift of expression, cannot tell it all in words. The gesture, the tones, the look on his face, told more than his tongue could tell. How distinctly he recalled the time when his mother held him in her lap, and looked down into his face as she sang her favorite hymn:—

"Alas! and did my Saviour bleed?
And did my Sov'reign die?
Would he devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?"

And as the good mother sang the last stanza,

"But drops of grief can ne'er repay
The debt of love I owe:
Here, Lord, I give myself away,—
'Tis all that I can do,"

tears dropped from her eyes as she looked down upon the child in her lap and fell upon his face. As the good bishop told us these things his voice trembled and his eyes filled, as if he still felt his mother's arms about him.

How deeply the impression was then made upon his tender mind—how intensely it has been retained—that a good and sinless One had died for him! One scene he recalled with pathetic simplicity. When a little child—his mother's songs in his ears and his mother's prayers in his heart—he was playing near the house in a skirt of woods where the autumn shadows and sunshine were mingling on the ground, and the autumn gold and purple were upon the leaves. He began to think over the song,

“Alas ! and did my Saviour bleed ?”

The thought went down into his heart, “Jesus died for me—for me,” and he wondered, “Shall I ever see Jesus? Will he ever come to me?”

And this October day, as we write of these things, a saintly face, a silvered head, and a bent form rises before us, and the echoes of the first song we remember ever to have heard, and the sweet, soft notes of the first tune we ever learned to sing, come back to us. It is dear grandmother, sitting in the low rocking chair with a baby sister in her arms, singing to one of the old tunes she had learned in Virginia, when the first circuit preachers came to her father's house:—

“Hark, my soul, it is the Lord ;
’Tis thy Saviour—hear his words.
Jesus speaks, he speaks to thee :—
‘Say, poor sinner, lov’st thou me?’”

How that question stirred our young heart—

“Say, poor sinner, lov’st thou me?”

And as she sang on of Him who "delivered," and "sought" out, and healed poor sinners; whose love was stronger and tenderer than a mother's for her child, we wondered, "Can He love me better than mother loves me?" And as she sang the next lines—well do we remember now how her trembling voice swelled out into fuller tones at this stanza—

"Thine is an unchanging love,
Higher than the heights above,
Deeper than the depths beneath,
Free and faithful, strong as death,"

we wanted to love Him. And right then, though we had no words, we did "love Him because he first loved us."

And grandmother's song brings back another remembrance, that grows more and more precious as the years drift us onward. In the soft twilight mother takes our hand and we go through the hall—where the first presidents, in their gilded frames, were always looking at each other—into the old-fashioned parlor, the chairs pushed close back against the wall. In the left-hand corner, near the book-case, she knelt and prayed so earnestly, as if pleading with One she knew and loved, for some great favor. "And, O God," she prayed, "bless my little boy and make him good!" That prayer was no more misunderstood then than it is forgotten now.

From the night our parents married the sacred fire never went out. The morning and the evening

came not more regularly than the morning and evening sacrifice. And when the priest of our house passed over the Jordan—that parted its waves before him as his “feet were dipped in the brim of the water” and “entered into his rest”—his children still guarded the holy fire. And, God be praised! it has never gone out since the night they joined hands and hearts in the old village church, March 11, 1838. The first thing in this world that we remember is father, sitting by the window, on the left of the fire-place, in mother’s room, reading the Bible. How strong and yet how soft, how firm and yet how patient he was—governor, priest, and father of his house! The Bible lesson was about Daniel and the den of lions. And as we listened to the wonderful story we thought, not so generally and broadly, but as distinctly then as now, “it is better to go down among the lions than to worship a man or an idol; it is better to die than sin.”

No: we must not measure a child’s knowledge or experience by his ability to express what he knows and feels—by his ability to talk religion. And *mere ability to talk religion* is one of the least satisfactory of all its manifestations—one of the most uncertain and delusive tests of its reality and measures of its power.

Perhaps not one in a hundred of the adult members of the Church can repeat the Articles of Religion, or make an argument to prove their truth.

By all means adults should know, and children should learn, the Articles of Religion, and be able to explain and to prove them; but this is not the knowledge that saves. And no extent or accuracy, breadth or depth of such knowledge, is saving knowledge. Mere knowledge is dead, "being alone."

It would be exceedingly misleading to estimate the piety, either of a man or a child, by his ability to state his creed clearly and to argue for it ably. But there are blunderers who catechise—in such a scholastic and, to the child at least, dead form of words—about his faith and experience, and then discount both, because, forsooth, it cannot tell its thoughts! How can they forget the words of our Lord: "And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me; but whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea?"

In the "Autobiography and Memoir of Guthrie" is an anecdote that well illustrates the thought that we would impress. It was on the 22d of February, 1873, the day before he died. The writer of the memoir says: "On the 22d, in conversation with Admiral Baillie Hamilton, (an Episcopalian friend of former years, who visited and prayed with him daily,) he mentioned the story of an old Scotch minister, who proposed to keep back from the

Lord's table a young woman whose knowledge he found grievously defective. Rising to go, the girl burst into tears: 'It's true, sir, I canna speak for him, but I think I could dee for him!'"

The poor girl knew the Saviour better than the honest but blundering pastor, who—under shepherd though he claimed to be—knew not even the lambs of the fold. And there are many children, like the Scotch lassie, who cannot "talk for Christ," but who love him well enough to "die for him." Let us take heed lest we require of them what our Lord and Master has not required; lest we lay upon them burdens that he has not imposed; lest, by our arbitrary shibboleths, we slay at the "passages of the Jordan" those who are truly of the Lord's chosen ones; lest, by our misconceptions and unreasonable requirements, we make the Church, which ought to be a "nursing mother" to our children, a stranger and enemy; lest we ourselves, by our hardness and unbelief and want of love, become hinderers instead of helpers, shutting up the way that leads our little ones to the Saviour.

It would be a right worthy thing if godly ministers and fathers and mothers would lend a hand to clear away the ecclesiastical rubbish—heaped up by the drift of centuries—that confronts and hinders and dismays our children as they seek the Lord. Would God we could strike one good blow to clear the way for their little feet!

CHAPTER VI.

"FEED MY LAMBS."

WE often judge the conduct of young Christians harshly because we expect unreasonable and unnatural things of them. We too frequently overlook the fact that a child converted is still a child. He retains not only, as adults do, his peculiar constitutional temperament, but the volatile disposition of childhood. It is as irrational, as it is unjust, to demand of a child that he should assume old ways because he professes religion. To do this is to outrage the benignant spirit of religion, and to do violence to one of the most beautiful and innocent traits of childhood—its pure and spontaneous joyousness, which is a precious gift of God to brighten a dark and to gladden a sorrowful world.

The graces of a converted child are, like itself, in their infancy. With time and favorable conditions, they will ripen into the maturest "fruits of the Spirit." How rash and injurious the hand that would rudely shake off the pearly blossoms because the dew rests upon them and the birds sing among them, and because, as yet, they are only blossoms and not ripe fruit also!

Dr. Talmage has some pungent but judicious

words on this subject that it may be useful to quote:—

"We expect too much of our children when they become Christians. Do not let us measure their qualifications by our bushel. We ought not to look for a gravity and deep appreciation of eternal things, such as we find in grown persons. We have seen old sheep in the pasture-field look anxious and troubled because the lambs would frisk. No doubt the children that were lifted by their mothers into Christ's arms and got his blessing, five minutes after he set them down, were as full of romp as before they came to him. The boy that, because he has become a Christian, is disgusted with ball-playing; the little girl who, because she has given her heart to God, has lost her interest in her waxen doll, is morbid and unhealthy. You ought not to set the life of a vivacious child to the tune of 'Old Hundred.'"

The injustice of these unnatural views of what is proper in religious children works a positive damage. Many children break down utterly under this man-imposed yoke and burden that is neither easy nor light. In many cases they never recover from the misconceptions of religion, and prejudices against it, that were burned into them by hardness and ignorance. Besides, this demand for unnatural sedateness tends to cultivate affectation in children. They cannot be what is required of them—old

men and women—and the persecuted children have nothing else left them that they can do but to act a part. No doubt, under such influences, they frequently mature into hypocrites.

We not only make unreasonable and unnatural demands of children professing religion, but we often judge their infirmities and failures with needless severity. For instance, a child recently admitted into the fellowship of the Church does wrong in some case. Very soon some sanctimonious wiseacre says: "I told you so—it was all excitement—that boy never was converted any way."

Now and then two hot-blooded little boys have a fight over their tops and their marbles. Doubtless, it is very wrong for the boys to fall out and then fall to blows. They should be taught the better way of settling disputes, or rather of keeping out of them altogether. They should, by all means, be taught the Divine and only true method—"overcoming evil with good." But shall we jump to the conclusion that these boys were never converted, or that they have fallen from grace altogether? God forbid! Such uncharitableness is worse sin than the fighting. No doubt, many little Christians who have tripped and stumbled in the way have been kept down forever because some heavy heel has been planted right upon their hearts, grinding them into dust. Bethlehem of Judea is not the only place where there has been sad "slaughter of the

innocents," nor Ramah the only scene of sorrow where, as the end of uncharitableness and misjudging, there has been "a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted because they are not." Verily, there are crueller swords than Herod's.

But if we would see clearly how cruel and unjust such judgments pronounced upon child-Christians are, let us apply them to the judges themselves. We may challenge them in the language of St. Paul: "Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonorest thou God?"

Only think of the consistency of those who question the sincerity of the little boys because they fell to blows, when they themselves are often indulging sinful tempers, restrained, it may be, only by personal cowardice or the fear of public opinion. Sometimes, the grown-up censors of childish morals vent their rage in hard words instead of hard licks, or, what is worse, in mean and slanderous tale-bearing and backbiting. We do not defend the boys who fight, but it would be an easier task than to defend parents who grumble, and whine, and quarrel, and fret, and sulk hatefully at each other. A sorry sight it is to see a church member pass loftily

by a brother without speaking, and then stop to lecture a child on his inconsistency in the matter of yesterday's fisticuff with the little boy he is playing with and would fight for, if need be, to-day. The boys "made it up" before night, but upon the wrath of these two old people who have fallen out about a trifle many suns have risen and set. They have had the pastor in hot water over their case for a year, and have thrown at least two committees into despair, after vain efforts to bring them together. Besides, they have well-nigh destroyed the Church to which they belong, and to which they owe all they are.

There is a story of Dr. Talmage, whose words we quoted before, and a lady, one of his flock, that is good enough to be true, and that makes its own application, even though it be apocryphal.

It seems that the lady had a little daughter, about twelve years of age, who was also a member of Talmage's Church in Brooklyn. One day, so the story goes, little Mary, as we may call her, was tempted, and, alas! she fell. She told a falsehood. Her mother, whose conscience it seems was a little morbid and also a little forgetful, was, very properly, distressed, but she came to a very unwise conclusion. The sad mother—and parents do well to be sad when their children tell falsehoods—concluded that Mary's religion was all gone, albeit the child was full of penitential sorrow. She even doubted

whether the child ever had any religion at all. And then she thought of the Church, and concluded that it would be disgraced—as if one of the chief duties of the Church in this world were not to “restore,” and “in the spirit of meekness,” such as are “overtaken in a fault.” So the good and sorrowful mother, quite unnecessarily, as it seems to us, went to see Brother Talmage about the matter. Telling him the whole story, she proposed, to save the Church from dishonor, that Mary’s name should be taken from the register. With some people discipline is synonymous with expulsion. The good sister, as it appears, was one of this class. It is said that Talmage’s methods are sometimes a little direct. This time, at least, the treatment was quite heroic.

“Sister,” said the pastor, “how long have you been in the Church?”

“Seventeen years, Brother Talmage.”

“How many lies have you told in that time—telling people you were glad to see them when you were sorry—that you were ‘not at home’ when you were, and such like things?”

Mary’s name was not taken off the Church book.

Our mistakes and prejudices have, no doubt, greatly hindered the growth of grace in our children, as well as largely curtailed our power to do them good. What would we think of a nurseryman who would take the most delicate tropical plant out

of his hot-house, and "leave it out" all night, on the north side of the house, with the thermometer at zero? What blighting, killing frosts have fallen upon more precious flowers than any that are brought from over the sea by our coldness, and hardness, and unreasonableness, and want of sympathy, and unbelief!

Most of us have many misconceptions on this whole subject. We demand knowledge and power of expression that God does not demand; we fail to see how perfectly adapted to the mind of a child are the truths of the Gospel; we do not estimate aright the influences and instructions of the Holy Ghost; we require too much, as well as unnatural things, of our children.

Our conclusion is this: a child is susceptible of religious influences from the beginning of its life; it is capable of religion as soon as it is capable of sinning; it can learn religious truth earlier and easier than it can learn any other form of truth.

Now what are the facts as to children who profess religion and join the Church? Some of them fall away, most probably through the negligence or unkindness of others; the majority grow up into Christian men and women. Take them altogether, the children of the Church are as consistent and steadfast as are those who profess religion after they have grown to be hardened sinners. For our part, we had much rather risk the children. The truly

great preacher and pastor, Spurgeon, a few years ago, made the following statement: "I have during the past year received forty or fifty children into Church membership. Among those I have had at any time to exclude from church-fellowship, out of a Church of twenty-seven hundred members, I have never had to exclude a single one who was received while yet a child."

Any Church will show, if a test is made, that the great majority of its very best people were brought to Christ while yet they were children.

The Rev. Eugene R. Hendrix, of Missouri, in an article published in the "Sunday-School Magazine" of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in 1871, made the following statements and reflections, that are amply borne out by the observations of other pastors, and the history of the great and good men whose names he mentions. Mr. Hendrix says: "In an informal meeting of seventy-six ministers, where the writer was present, it was found that forty-two of them were converted under sixteen, twenty under fourteen, and only seven after they were twenty-one.

"Wilbur Fisk and Jonathan Edwards were but eight years of age when they were converted. Bishop Asbury was but thirteen, Bishop Roberts was ten, Joseph Benson was sixteen, while Richard Baxter and our lamented Bishop Andrew, like Samuel, John the Baptist, and Timothy, were so taught to

love God and put implicit faith in his promises, that they never knew the time when first his service became their supreme delight. Baxter discovered, as the explanation of his experience, that 'Education is as properly a means of grace as preaching.' Our preachers, whose names are household words, began while mere 'boys' to proclaim the Gospel. Such were Jesse Lee, and Hedding, and Bascom, and Capers, and Reddick Pierce; and such are Durbin, Foster, and Lovick Pierce. The list might be greatly increased by the names of the honored living and of the lamented dead."

Doubtless we have much to learn as to the right treatment and nurture of our children who profess Christ and enter into the fellowship of the Church. O that we were wise, that we were full of the "mind that was in Christ"—that we might know how to feed and care for his tender lambs! There is no higher duty, there can be no holier work or more sacred trust than this. Let us go to the Sea of Galilee, in the gray dawn of that morning when the risen Jesus talked with the now penitent and pardoned apostle. "So when they had dined; Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea. Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs."

Let us learn this lesson well, and pray for grace to imitate the example of the good Shepherd, who

"gathers the lambs with his arms, and carries them in his bosom."

We have long believed that the Churches are in nothing so deficient as in their care of young children who are brought to Christ. Too often they are left to themselves. Too often they are only baptized and registered and turned loose, as a careless shepherd does his lambs—marks them, and then turns them out to "pick up" a living in the woods and on the commons as best they can, meanwhile dodging robbers, dogs, and wolves as they may be able!

Blessed be God! despite our blind and sinful negligence, many of our little children are soundly converted to Christ by the Spirit, many of them stay converted, grow in grace, and, at last, forever escape the ravening wolf that prowls about the fold, and dares sometimes to enter its gates that he may bear away the tender lambs!

There is a common notion—may be, though we do not know, only a superstition—that angels stand guard over little babies to shield them from many hard knocks and falls that, but for the support of angelic hands and the shelter of angelic wings, would prove fatal to the helpless ones. No wonder that many fond mothers believe that invisible guards keep watch around the cradles in which their darlings sleep. No doubt a good Providence keeps ward and watch over the little babes, although our Father may not call in the angels, strong and good as they

are, to do this holy work. And it does seem to us that Heaven has little children who profess Christ in most tender and loving care. And if there is any difference, there is more anxious watch and tender painstaking when Satan has them at some disadvantage, just as mothers are most watchful and loving when trouble comes upon their children, or sickness takes the bloom from their rosy cheeks. How often have we outwatched the stars with the delicate mother, who seemed never to grow weary while there was hope that death might be turned away from our little ones! Not more tenderly, we are sure, did Jesus rest his hands on the heads of the infants that the Jewish mothers brought for his blessing, than he cares for and blesses his youthful disciples, who are so truly "babes in Christ." "He who keepeth Israel neither slumbereth nor sleepeth," and he is the Keeper of the little children that come to him.

O that the Church were indeed a "nursing mother" to "babes in Christ!" How shall we ever learn this holy duty till we get closer to Jesus—till we have more of his Spirit—till we love the lambs of the fold, according to our power to love, even as he himself loved them?

What priceless blessings the right care and nurture of believing children would bring to us who are older, and who, for that very reason, need the simplicity and unquestioning trust of children, to

maintain within our breasts the true spirit of a child in Christ Jesus!

Would God that in every true and holy sense the last prophecy of the Old Testament Scriptures were fulfilled in us—that God would "turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE FAMILY—ITS BASIS IN MARRIAGE.

GOD, in the beginning, established the family. Patriarchy is the only divinely established *form* of government known to men. For while, as to civil government, it is true that "the powers that be are ordained of God," it is also true that the form of government is left to the determination of the governed. Neither monarchies, nor empires, nor republics, nor any other particular forms of government, are divinely appointed. But the family God has ordained; as Robert Hall has well expressed it: "The union of mankind in families is ascribed to God, and is a distinguished mark of his loving-kindness. 'He setteth the solitary in families,' 'He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children.' The ties of domestic society are of his forming: the birth and preservation of children are eminent instances of his favor and beneficence. It is surely incumbent on families, then, to acknowledge him in their domestic relation."

"The basis of the Christian family," says a writer in M'Clintock and Strong's "Cyclopædia," "is Christian marriage, or monogamy, the exclusive

union of one man to one woman. The deepest ground of this union, and its true aim, without which *Christian* marriage and family are impossible, is the consciousness of union in Christ, or in the love of God in Christ, the source of individual sympathy as well as of brotherly and universal love. Marriage has, in common with Christian friendship, the bond of tender sentiments; but the former is an *exclusive* bond between two persons of different sexes, whose personality is *complemented*, so to speak, by each other. It is, therefore, a life-long relation, while friendship may be only temporary.

“Two persons thus joined in marriage lay the foundation of a Christian family; indeed, they constitute a family, though yet incomplete and undeveloped. It awaits its completion in the birth of children. In proportion, however, as the married couple live in a state of holiness, so are the natural desires for issue and their gratification made subservient to the divinely ordered end of marriage, and accompanied by a sense of dependence on the blessing and will of God.”

“Marriage,” says Dr. Charles Hodge, in his “Systematic Theology,” is a divine institution. It is founded on the nature of man as constituted by God. He made man male and female, and ordained marriage as the indispensable condition of the continuance of the race. Marriage was instituted before the existence of civil society, and, therefore,

cannot in its essential nature be a civil institution."

The perfection of Patriarchy, as a form of government, grows out of the peculiar relation of husband and wife. When Eve was brought to Adam he said—and doubtless under divine prompting: "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called *Woman* because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

In showing the wickedness of the "traditions of the elders" on the subject of easy divorce, our Lord sets forth the same doctrine of the unity and indissolubleness of Christian marriage. He said: "But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh: so that they are no more twain but one flesh. Wherefore what God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

It is such a union as to produce, in some sense, identity.

"God," says Wuttke, in his "Christian Ethics," "in his primitive institution of marriage, that is, by his creative will, established the essence of marriage to consist in the fact that the two consorts should be one flesh, one single absolutely inseparable life, as to soul and body, even as every living body is a

single inseparable whole, and any dissevering of it the death of the same.”

The entire oneness of the married pair and their complete community of interest — particularly in their children—is therefore the basis and the condition of the perfect administration of this divinely instituted and most perfect of all possible forms of human government. The wedding and the Sabbath are the two hallowed institutions which come down to us from the primeval innocence of our race. Among the earliest records of the human race is the sacred history of the divine institution of marriage :

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him ; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it.” As truly as beautifully does the marriage service set forth the dignity and sacredness of this relation when it is declared to be “an honorable estate, instituted of God in the time of man’s innocency, signifying unto us the mystical union that is between Christ and his Church ; which holy estate Christ adorned and beautified with his presence, and first miracle that he wrought, in Cana of Galilee, and is commended by St. Paul to be honorable among all men.” How wise the caution that follows : “And therefore is not by any to be entered into unadvisedly, but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, and in the fear of God.”

We cannot exaggerate the importance to society and to the Church of entertaining sound and scriptural views of the sanctity of marriage, for the more nearly we realize the divine idea of marriage the more nearly will we approach to the Edenic purity and happiness of the human race. The excellence of the following quotation from Dr. Hodge's "Systematic Theology" will more than excuse its length:—

“The strongest proof of the sanctity of the marriage relation in the sight of God is to be found in the fact that both in the Old and in the New Testaments, it is made the symbol of the relation between God and his people. ‘Thy Maker is thy husband,’ are the words of God, and contain a world of truth, of grace, and of love. The departure of the people from God is illustrated by a reference to a wife forsaking her husband; while God’s forbearance, tenderness, and love, are compared to those of a faithful husband to his wife. ‘As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee!’ (Isa. lxii, 5.) In the New Testament, this reference to the marriage relation, to illustrate the union between Christ and the Church, is frequent and instructive. The Church is called ‘the bride, the Lamb’s wife.’ (Rev. xxi, 9.) And the consummation of the work of salvation is set forth as the marriage supper of the Lamb. (Rev. xix, 7, 9.) In Ephesians v, 22–25, the union between husbands

and wives,* and the duties thence resulting, are set forth as so analogous to the union between Christ and his Church, that in some cases it is hard to determine to which union the language of the apostle is to be applied. . . .

“The analogy which the apostle traces out in Ephesians v, 22–33, between the conjugal relation and the union between Christ and his Church, brings out the scriptural doctrines of marriage more clearly than, perhaps, any other passage in the Bible. No analogy is expected to answer in all respects, and no illustration, borrowed from earthly relations, can bring out the fullness of the things of God. The relation, therefore, between a husband and his wife, is only an adumbration of the relation of Christ to his Church. Still there is an analogy between the two. (1.) As the apostle teaches, the love of Christ to his Church is peculiar and exclusive. It is such as he has for no other class or body of creatures in the universe. So the love of the husband for his wife is particular and exclusive. It is such as he has for no other object; a love in which no one can participate. (2.) Christ’s love for his Church is self-sacrificing. He gave himself for it, he purchased it with

* “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church: and he is the Saviour of the body. Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it.”

his blood. So the husband should, and when true, does, in all things sacrifice himself for his wife. (3.) Christ and his Church are one; one in the sense that the Church is his body. So the husband and wife are in such a sense one, that a man in loving his wife loves himself. (4.) Christ's life is communicated to the Church. As the life of the head is communicated to the members, and the life of the vine to the branches, so there is, in a mysterious sense, a community of life between Christ and his Church. In like manner, in a sense no less truly mysterious, there is a community of life between husband and wife.

“From all this it follows that as it would be utterly incongruous and impossible that Christ should have two bodies, two brides, two Churches, so it is no less incongruous and impossible that a man should have two wives. That is, the conjugal relation, as it is set forth in Scripture, cannot by possibility subsist except between one man and one woman.”

If we have right views of the divine institution of marriage and of its nature and sanctity, we will readily conclude that in the word of God—and not elsewhere—we are to find the laws and principles that should regulate our conduct in relation to it.

We prefer, at this point, to borrow the wise words of learned and eminent Christian writers. In considering the principles that should determine men and women in entering into this sacred relation,

Wuttke employs the following language: "The contracting of marriage is neither a mere business transaction, nor a fruit of a simple falling in love; where moral love does not form the marriage, there it is desecrated. Hence marriages cannot be planned and brought about simply by parents no more than can the parents practice virtue for their children; the moral must be accomplished by each for himself. The free personal choice, that is absolutely necessary to marriage proper, is not to be made arbitrarily or by hap-hazard; it aims essentially at the realization of the complete life-unity of the two persons, to the end of moral communion."

It is the sanctity of the marriage relation, as well as the many and great blessings which its divine Author designed it to secure to mankind, that makes all merely selfish or sensual, and therefore unmoral, marriage an unspeakable shame and sin.

Dr. Timothy Dwight has some admirable observations on this subject. He says; "The propensities, inwrought into our nature as a law, and the declarations of Scripture, teach us alike, and irresistibly, that this union is to be formed only on the ground of affection, regulated by prudence. On this plan, and on this only, can marriage be reasonably expected to be happy. We are not, therefore, to wonder, that persons who marry for the purpose of allying themselves with families of distinction;

acquiring or repairing fortunes; obtaining rank, or gratifying in any manner ambition, avarice, or sensuality; should afterward find themselves unhappy. These persons do not, intentionally, marry either husbands or wives. They marry distinction, fortunes, titles, villas, luxury, and grandeur. The objects to which they intentionally unite themselves they acquire. It cannot be wondered at that they do not gain those which they never sought; nor that they do not find the blessings of marriage, following plans and actions, which, unless incidentally, have no relation to marriage. These persons, it is true, find the objects, to which they are really wedded, incumbered by beings, who stand in the places of husbands and wives. Still, they cannot form even a pretense for complaining; since, with their eyes open, they voluntarily subject themselves, for the sake of such gratifications, to all the evils arising out of the incumbrance. The person who wishes to obtain the blessings, designed by this or any other institution of God, must intentionally conform to the nature and spirit of the institution itself, and to all the precepts concerning it, by which he has manifested his own pleasure."

We may offer a few observations here on the subject of the indissolubleness of marriage, except by death and the one other cause allowed by the plain teaching of our Saviour—infidelity to the marriage vow. The essential oneness of the husband and

wife constitutes the reason why infidelity to the marriage vow must work its dissolution. An eminent writer—whose name escapes us—has said. “The reason of this is, the parties are no longer one, in the mysterious sense in which the Bible declares a man and his wife to be one.”

On this whole subject there is no safety outside of the word of God. Marriage is an institution of God, and no laws—ecclesiastical or civil—that contravene the divine law in relation to it can be, for a moment, for any consideration whatsoever, approved or obeyed by those who profess to regulate their opinion and their conduct by the word of the Lord. We quote again from Dr. Hodge’s admirable remarks on this subject:—

“The passages in the Gospel referring to this subject are Matthew v, 31, 32; xix, 3-9; Mark x, 2-12; and Luke xvi, 18. The simple meaning of these passages seems to be, that marriage is a permanent compact, which cannot be dissolved at the will of either of the parties. If, therefore, a man arbitrarily puts away his wife and marries another, he commits adultery. If he repudiates her on just grounds and marries another, he commits no offense. Our Lord makes the guilt of marrying after separation to depend on the ground of the separation. Saying, ‘that if a man puts away his wife for any cause save fornication, and marries another, he commits adultery;’ is saying that ‘the offense is not

committed if the specified ground of divorce exists.' And this is saying that divorce, when justifiable, dissolves the marriage tie. . . .

"It cannot be dissolved by any voluntary act of repudiation by the contracting parties, nor by any act of the Church or State. 'Those whom God hath joined together no man can put asunder.' The compact may, however, be dissolved, although by no legitimate act of man. It is dissolved by death. It is dissolved by adultery; and, as Protestants teach, by willful desertion. In other words, there are certain things which from their nature work a dissolution of the marriage bond. All the legitimate authority the State has in the premises is to take cognizance of the fact that the marriage is dissolved, officially to announce it, and to make suitable provisions for the altered relations of the parties."

No human arguments or theories, however ingenious and plausible; no human legislation, by Church or State, can change in the least degree the essential basis, character, or obligations of the marriage institution, divinely ordained and regulated. The attempt to change the nature or to diminish the obligations of marriage is treason to God and to the most sacred interests of humanity. All those theories that are at the bottom of the modern divorce laws—which, indeed, alone make them possible—multiplying the grounds of divorce and facilitating

its procurement, are false, wicked, and injurious to the last degree. Whatever theory of marriage there may be which in the least discounts its sanctity, lessens its obligations, abridges its responsibilities, or facilitates its dissolution—except as allowed by the word of God—is, indeed, nothing more nor less than an inspiration of Satan. It is a sort of sacrilege to think of marriage as a mere partnership—terminable at will, like any mere business association. “Free-love”—as certain knavish fanatics call it—is brutality. It is sensual, bestial, devilish. Unscriptural divorce laws indicate retrogression into worse than barbarism. They violate nature and outrage grace. They foster licentiousness, break down the family, destroy the peace, and debauch the purity of society. No pen can overstate the ever intensifying evils which flow from false views of marriage, and from laws designed to facilitate its dissolution. There are, perhaps, no more alarming symptoms of increasing social corruption in our country than the multiplication of divorces. The “easy divorce” laws that prevail in some States are first effect and then cause. That they were enacted, or could be enacted, was the effect and the proof of the degeneracy of domestic purity and social virtue; as soon as they became operative they began at once to make large contributions to the aggravation of the evils that their authors pretended they were designed to hold in check.

Dr. Hodge says justly and forcibly :—

“As all denominations of Christians, Romanists and Protestants, are of one mind on this subject, it is matter of astonishment that these objectionable divorce laws are allowed to stand on the statute-books of so many of our States. This fact proves either that public attention has not to a sufficient degree been called to the subject, or that the public conscience is lamentably blinded or seared. The remedy is with the Church, which is the witness of God on earth, bound to testify to his truth and to uphold his cause.

“If Christians, in their individual capacity and in their Church courts, would unite in their efforts to arouse and guide public sentiment on this subject, there is little doubt that these objectionable laws would be repealed.”

The following extract from one of Dr. Dwight's discourses is instructive and suggestive at this point in our discussion: “In France, within three months after the law permitting divorces was enacted by the National Assembly, there was in the city of Paris almost as many divorces registered as marriages. In the whole kingdom there were, as reported by the Abbé Gregoire, chairman of the committee of the National Assembly on that subject, upward of twenty thousand divorces registered within about a year and a half. ‘This law,’ added the abbé, ‘will soon ruin the whole nation.’”

The prophecy has been fulfilled; this and other such laws and doctrines—with the sentiments they engender and the practices they encourage—*have* ruined France.

Cursed be the hand that is lifted against the marriage altar!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FAMILY—THE BASIS OF CHURCH AND STATE.

THE family is the beginning of society and the foundation of government. It is before the Church, or the State, and both grow out of and depend upon it. This is not a human device, but a divine appointment. It is not an arbitrary arrangement, but a necessary relation. It cannot be otherwise. It inheres in the very constitution under which man is created and under which the development of the race must proceed. Both Church and State existed partially and potentially in the first married pair. "For two persons," as Wuttke has said, "thus joined in marriage lay the foundation of a Christian family; indeed, they constitute a family, though yet incomplete and undeveloped. It awaits its completion in the birth of children." "Individuals," says Howe, "are elements of families; families are elements of which both Churches and kingdoms, or commonwealths, are made up; and as the one of these is purely civil, the other purely sacred, that which is elementary to both must be both." And Harris says: "Here we find ourselves looking in on the elements of all the forms of human society."

In ancient Greece the idea of the family was the

nucleus of society, or of the State. Aristotle speaks of the family as the foundation of the State. "Parents," observes Wuttke, "are the first princes, and true princes are the fathers of their people; *patres*—fathers, was the title of distinction of the Roman senators; 'elders' is used in a like sense for the leaders of moral society in almost all the free constitutions of antiquity and also of the Church." It is Montesquieu, we believe, who says: "Man is born in society, and there he remains." Another writer remarks, "The family is a rehearsal for society." It should be also a rehearsal for the Church.

We sometimes speak, in a loose way, of the Jewish and the Christian Churches as if they were two distinct and totally different things. But this is not a correct or scriptural view of the subject. Richard Watson says: "The Christian Church is not another Church, but the very same that was before the coming of Christ, having the same faith with it, and interested in the same covenant. Great alterations, indeed, were made in the outward state and condition of the Church, by the coming of the Messiah. The carnal privilege of the Jews, in their separation from other nations to give birth to the Messiah, then failed, and with that also their claim on that account to be the children of Abraham. The ordinances of worship suited to that state of things then expired, and came to an end. New ordinances of worship were appointed, suitable to the new light and grace

which were then bestowed upon the Church. The Gentiles came into the faith of Abraham along with the Jews, being made joint partakers with them in his blessings. But none of these things, nor the whole collectively, did make such an alteration in the Church but that it was still one and the same. The olive-tree was still the same, only some branches were broken off, and others grafted into it. The Church is, and always was, one and the same."

And it has always been—where it has been a Church at all—a Christian Church; for Christ Jesus—"Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end"—was in the beginning, and is now and forever will be, the head and life of the Church.

Dr. John Owen, in one place, remarks: "Sin having entered into the world, God was pleased to found his Church (the Catholic or Universal Church) in the promise of the Messiah given to Adam." Thus Adam, who was the first ruler, was also the first priest. Both State and Church began with the first family. Robert Hall does not go too far when he says of the family: "This sort of society is the root and origin of every other; and as it is the most ancient, so it is bound together by ties the most tender and sacred. Every other social bond in which men are united is loose and incidental, compared to that which unites the members of the same family."

If we trace the Bible history of our race we will find the same general views sustained and illus-

trated. All "new departures," so to speak, took their origin in the family. In the second founder of the race we have a striking illustration; Noah was both prince and priest of that household which was at once both State and Church. The same facts appear in the history of Abraham and of all the worthy and believing patriarchs. All the great lawgivers of antiquity have had some conception, more or less clear, of the principle we are endeavoring to set forth. But it is in the Bible that we find the clearest and most impressive recognition of the family in all its relations to the State and the Church. The call of Abraham and the covenant made with him involve this general fact. The new State and the new Church—that is, the reorganization of society and the rehabilitation of the Church—began not with a nation, or a tribe, but with the *family* of Abraham. Two out of the ten commandments look to the regulation and preservation of the family. When the venerable Joshua delivered his farewell exhortations he exclaimed, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Very deeply did he feel the sanctity and responsibilities of his relation to his family. The most thorough and useful labors of Ezra, as a reformer, were intended to preserve the purity of marriage and the integrity of the family among those who had returned from the captivity.

We cannot overestimate or overstate the import-

ance of the relations sustained by the family to all that concerns the real welfare of our race. Whatever strengthens and improves the family, strengthens and improves the State. Whatever degrades and disintegrates the family, destroys the State. All history will sustain the general view here presented. If the dead civilizations of ancient days could send us witnesses, they would bear no uncertain testimony. For Rome and Greece, as well as Judea, their true golden days were the days of their comparative fidelity to marriage vows and to family obligations. The noblest days of Roman history were those purer times when a wife, like the noble Lucretia, thought it better to die than to be dishonored; when chastity was reckoned a cardinal virtue; when sons were brought up honorably, and daughters virtuously. When divorce became easy, domestic virtue began to perish. Then the family began to fall to pieces; when the family fell, all that was truly great and noble in Rome fell with it. Herculaneum and Pompeii—now that they have been exhumed from their long burial under volcanic ashes—tell us what the family had become at the time of the greatest corruption and exhaustion of the Roman State. All that we know of Assyria, of Egypt, and, indeed, of all the great nations of ancient times, illustrates the same principle: with the degradation of the family began the disintegration and utter downfall of the nations themselves. The most

frightful corruption of society that human history records—the corruption of the antediluvian nations, avenged by the most terrible punishment that heaven has visited upon our world, the deluge, sweeping them all away—seems to have originated in a general breaking down of the sanctities of marriage and of the virtues of the family. And the second father of his race, as it seems, was spared for his exceptional purity as a husband and a father, for it is said, as distinguishing him from the rest, “Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations.” “This phrase,” says Murphy, “indicates the contrast between Noah and the men of his day. It is probable, moreover, that he was of pure descent, and in that respect also distinguished from his contemporaries who were the offspring of promiscuous intermarriage between the godly and the ungodly.”

In the family are the rock-foundations of whatever good and great things are possible to our race. In the family originate the impulses and inspirations of all high and true civilization. When trouble has come upon any nation—when defeat and disaster have swept its fields and crushed its industries, the restoration of even material vigor and prosperity must begin with the industry and economy of the household. Much more is it true that those who would reform the manners or morals of any nation must begin in the family. Whether in the Church or in the State, the fireside is the reformer's

true battle-ground—here reverses are suffered, here victories are won.

We have many utterly false and delusive measures of prosperity. That is not the most vigorous State, the most prosperous nation, the best government, where there is the largest population, the most splendid cities, the greatest refinement and polish of manners, the largest accumulations of gold, the most brilliant achievements in the arts and sciences—not unless these things are coincident with domestic purity and peace. After all, that is the best government whose influence is most potent in fostering and securing the greatest number of industrious, virtuous, and happy families. Indeed, is there any possible use of government that does not promote these ends? Is not that government, whatever it may be called, an unspeakable curse and nuisance, to be got rid of and out of sight, that can only exert an influence that must disintegrate and destroy the family?

And, as to the Church, that is the best Church which most perfectly shows its strong spiritual vitality by fostering religion in the family. A Church that does not make its families better is a wretched failure and fraud. Both Church and State have their origin in the family, and their chief end at last is the greatest good of the family. Their excellence is proved and measured by the contributions they bring to the family life.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FAMILY A SCHOOL OF RELIGION.

TRADITION—transmission from parent to child—is God's first and chosen plan for the perpetuation and extension of religion in the earth. We do not, in saying this, forget the institution of a public, Christian ministry, nor do we in anywise undervalue the office of a true preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Christian ministry is also a Divine institution—the true preacher is one “called of God.” To those who hear he also is “one sent from God.” He who has no Divine vocation and mission may be many other things, but he is not, he cannot be, a true preacher of Christ Jesus.

The preacher's responsibilities are great and manifold. His opportunities are vast, his duties difficult, his office sacred, his rewards glorious. He is a man far removed from the low level of life's carnal and selfish motives. He is not his own, but Christ's and humanity's. He must not seek his own will but Christ's. He should be able to say from his heart of hearts: “For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord. whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.”

It is a very sad thing when a Christian minister fails to walk worthy of his high vocation. As a falling tree crushes the humbler shrubs and more tender plants that grow and cling about it, so the apostate preacher when he falls, falls not alone.

It is a humiliating thing to see a preacher so conduct himself that he does not deserve the respect that is due to his sacred office. It is an ominous thing for any community or people when it becomes the custom to treat God's chosen servants with disrespect. It is a shameful and wicked thing when a depraved press delights in inventing ribald and profane jests to their confusion, or in publishing slanders to their undoing. High and holy is the place the watchman holds who stands on Zion's walls and warns the city of the enemy. Truly did Isaiah sing: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"

Let us reverence this holy office as it becomes us to do; and let preachers so walk as to deserve reverence. But the father was a priest before there was a priestly order, as he was a king before there was a nation. Richard Watson's observations on this subject are judicious: "In ancient times the heads of families were their priests; of Abraham the Almighty said, 'I know him, that he will com-

mand his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.' Nor did parents cease, in a very important sense, to be the priests in their families, after the establishment of the Levitical priesthood. 'David returned' religiously 'to bless his household.' In this respect no change has taken place under the Christian dispensation. In the Christian Church, as well as among the Jews, there is the public ministry; but the head of every family is still its prophet and its priest, daily to offer spiritual sacrifices. And from this we come to a conclusion, which too many forget, but which every wise and pious person will carefully remember, that, if he is at the head of a family, he is, in fact, a sacred person, and has a sacred office."

Yes, that is it; the parent is "a sacred person, and has a sacred office." The father is generally named first as the responsible head of the family, but the obligations of parenthood rest equally upon the mother. When God delivers a solemn charge to a father to bring up his children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," it is to the mother also and equally. As it seems to us, it is indispensable to recognize and accept as unalterable two things: 1. The father is the representative and responsible head of the house. 2. The mother is equally responsible for the duties of her place.

Astronomers tell us of certain double stars that revolve about a common center, and in some way are necessary to each other. So, in the family life, there is a common center of interest and responsibility, affection and duty; they are two, yet one, and each is necessary to the other. The parents are the common source of the life of their children; we can no more think of a family government as perfect that lacks either the paternal or maternal element, than we can think of parenthood itself as complete in the father, or the mother alone.

The inspired record says; "So God created man in his own image." This is the first statement, showing that the first man is the essential unit and representative of the race. But the historian of creation does not complete his sentences without adding this other word: "male and female created he them." In a sense the woman was created in the man, but the man himself was not perfect till woman—the wife-man, his complement—was formed. Perfection of humanity is found in the union of the two; the harmony of the family in the adjustment of their resemblances and their differences. And surely, if we are to study and understand aright the fatherhood of God, we must understand the true meaning of human *parenthood*—not mere fatherhood, or mere motherhood, but perfect and entire parenthood, for both motherhood and fatherhood are necessary to complete the image of the Divine

fatherhood. Whatever is good and precious in our earthly parents—in our mothers as well as in our fathers—is but a reflection of the perfections of Him of whom it is said in one place, “As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him;” and in another, “As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.”

Let it be insisted on with all possible emphasis that parenthood is fatherhood and motherhood. In this complicated yet simple relation the Bible and nature alike make the father the responsible head, and yet, in no sense, is he more essential to the perfection of family life than the mother. Whatever duties, therefore, we shall find enjoined in the word of God upon the father in the instruction and discipline of his children, these are the mother's duties also.

When Moses, the man of God, gave the second statement of the law as it is recorded in the book of Deuteronomy, he laid down very broadly and unmistakably the duty of parents as to the religious instruction of their children. After stating the obligation to love the one God supremely, Moses, speaking under divine direction, says: “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the

way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

After further warnings and exhortations this additional injunction is recorded: "And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord our God hath commanded you? Then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt; and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand: and the Lord showed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes: and he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he sware unto our fathers. And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day. And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us."

"The priests' lips should keep knowledge," and the people should "seek the law at his mouth," and yet it pleased God to lay upon parents the chief duty, and, at once, the most important and difficult work, in preserving a saving knowledge of divine Providence and statutes in the world. They were to "teach diligently" his commandments and ordinances; they were to recite in the hearing of their children the marvelous providential history of

Israel, and to impress upon their young hearts a solemn sense of their relation to God and of their obligations to love and to obey him.

The Seventy-eighth Psalm is a deeply interesting poetic description of the leading events in Jewish history. Its date and author are not definitely known, but the preface contains a very striking recognition and statement of the divine purpose in laying upon parents the responsibility of the religious education of their children. It sets forth also, in stirring language, the admirable wisdom of the divine method. The Psalmist thus introduces his recital of the history of his people:—

“ Give ear, O my people, to my law : incline your ears to the words of my mouth. . . . I will open my mouth in a parable : I will utter dark sayings of old : which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children : that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born ; who should arise and declare them to their children : that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments : and might not be as

their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God."

Words cannot be plainer. God's dealings with his people were to be known by all the generations of Israel; to secure this great result God lays upon parents the duty of telling these things to their children, that they might tell it to their children, and so on and on to the last, that all "the generations to come might know them." The grand purpose of these parental instructions is that "the children which shall be born"—who, in turn, were to "arise and declare them to their children"—"may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God." It was not only designed to teach them God's ways, but, in teaching them the statutes and providences of God, to save them from the blunders and crimes of their fathers, and thus secure that noblest hope of our race—a course of improvement and development from age to age!

"And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation."

The father, the mother, the parent *is* a "sacred person." By no possibility can any other do the work of the parent. The duty inheres in the relation. The responsibility cannot be abridged, or laid down, or avoided. The work of the parent, in the religious education of his children, cannot be done by proxy. Even if another could do it better, it

would not relieve the parent of his peculiar obligation. The voice that calls to this duty is imperative—it must be obeyed. But no other can do the parent's work as well as the parent himself. He has the true vantage ground; no other created being can get as close to the child's heart as he ought to be able to do. The parent holds a mystic key that no other hand can fit to the wards of its locks. If the parent does not do his work it is forever undone. So left undone, the parent is guilty and the child wronged, and wronged irreparably. The child, in spite of parental delinquency, may, in the great mercy of God, be saved at last; but, if he has failed to receive proper parental instruction in the things of God, and to come under salutary parental influences during the formative period of his life, he has suffered a real loss that no blessings, advantages, culture, successes in other departments and through other instrumentalities can ever fully regain.

Truly and eloquently does Harris in his "Patriarchy" say: "Well might the mind be haunted age after age with a social ideal never yet realized! Life, a sacred thing. Every child a divine promise. Every family beginning the race anew from a higher point. Brothers and sisters ministering angels to each other's purity and beneficence. Every addition a new element of happiness. Education the rearing of a living temple. Conjugal love a central fountain in warm, fragrant, perpetual play. The father the

representative of God ; feeding them, as a prophet, with more than angel's food ; as a priest, standing at the portico of the temple to guard it from pollution, or ministering at its holy altar, and finding his spirit purified and refreshed by the service ; swaying like a king, a divine scepter, and tasting the God-like blessedness of seeing his subjects find happiness and freedom in obedience. The mother, the earliest to enter the infant heart, and to take possession in the name of God ; radiating on her children the light and life of her own intense affection, and invested in addition with the delegated and solemn reverence of paternal authority. Home, the home of the affections ; where law is superseded by love ; where the lowliest act is consecrated and ennobled by the highest motive ; and where separate individual interests are forgotten in the aim of each for the good of all. The family, sending forth its youthful members—each with a heritage of happy recollections and holy habits, impressed with the sanctity and high responsibilities of the domestic constitution, studiously trained and qualified to enter on them, and determined to raise still higher, if possible, in his own circle, the standard of his early home. The aged patriarch, happy in the consciousness of having linked his mind for good with all his own immediate offspring, and cheered by the prospect of transmitting, through them, the happiest influence to others through an ever-enlarging circle.

The generation, conscious of rising, and aspiring to rise still higher; recognizing in its present blessedness the proof that God is its *paterfamilias*; and valuing the future chiefly as the means of perpetual approximation to the only perfect home in the bosom of God. Such are the capabilities of the family, and the sunny visions at which it hints."

Surely since the wreck of Eden there has appeared among the children of men no picture so fair, so noble, so inspiring and so full of hope for both worlds, as a well-ordered and truly Christian family. Here indeed are repeated, from day to day, the miracles of Providence and the wonders of grace. Here, in a most precious and peculiar sense, the Lord is "Emmanuel," "which being interpreted is, God with us." Here is seen the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night. Around this habitation manna descends, "every morning new." Whatever else may be parched and arid, here there is dew "as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."

CHAPTER X.

THE DUTY OF TEACHING GOD'S WORD TO OUR CHILDREN.

FOR the children the family is a school—the parents being the divinely appointed teachers. This is not a question of mere privilege, although it is a very lofty privilege that God gives us when he allows us to teach his precious word to our children. It is a duty the most imperative, the most solemn, that can appeal to our judgment, our affections, and our conscience. He who does not know that he ought to teach God's word to his children—that he owes it to God, to his children, to the Church, to society, and to his own soul—does not know what every true father must know—does not feel as every true father must feel. It is not a question for the capriciousness of human inclination, or the arbitrariness of human choice. It is a question of law—as the ten commandments are law. God does not simply advise or exhort—he *commands*: “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”

This holy work all parents must do. God commands it. It is not a matter to be argued about—to be debated or doubted. It is a duty to be done—that must be done, if we would escape the righteous condemnation of a broken and holy law. Nor may this very sacred duty be left to accident for its performance—to be a pious amusement for our leisure, a something good enough when it is done, but that may be omitted innocently by us, and without damage to our children. We are not only to teach God's word to our children, but to intend to do it; not only to teach them, but to take all possible pains to do it. God's word is plain—it is unmistakable: "And thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children." He who does not understand this does not understand the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill;" he does not understand any thing. No place is left for doubting or dodging this duty; for omitting it or transferring its responsibilities. "And *thou*"—not another, or others, how great, or good, or learned, or skillful soever they may be—"and thou shalt teach them"—not incidentally, casually, carelessly, occasionally—"thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children."

And it is a perpetual duty, a constant obligation, an unintermittent responsibility. It presses upon us, it commands us at home, abroad, every-where, all the time. The sense of obligation to do this holy duty must pervade and solemnize our entire

family life. No business, however pressing, no pleasure, however fascinating, no human interest whatever can affect it. It is not a duty for one man—as the man of wealth, of leisure, of learning, of piety. Nothing, among all the employments or pleasures of men, can be so important that it may interfere with this duty, hinder this work, lighten this obligation. Our condition in life; our mere circumstances of prosperity or adversity, wealth or poverty, have nothing to do with it. Are we parents? Have we been the means of bringing children into this world? *The fact of parenthood settles the question of responsibility and constitutes the call to duty.* If we are parents we must—not we may—teach God's word, his will, his providence, his grace, his saving truths to our children.

How definite, how precise are the words! How imperative the command! And no wonder; the eternal interests of immortal souls are connected with the performance or neglect of this duty.

As already pointed out, this peculiar duty is one that, if done at all, must be done by the parents; if they do it not it is never done, it can never be done. Let us read again, carefully and prayerfully, this command of God, and, if there is any heart to believe in us, we will respond to it: "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children." When? Where? "And shalt

talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

These words are much plainer in their meaning, and far more impressive in their injunctions, than if God, speaking through Moses, had said: "And at a certain set time"—on Sunday afternoon at three o'clock; and at the church, or in the Sunday-school, or by the fireside—"thou shalt teach these words." No; this duty abides with us, rests on our consciences as we sit in our houses, walks with us by the way, solemnizes our thoughts when we lie down, meets us with its demands when we rise up. It is a duty that begins with the birth of our first child and ends never. Nay, it begins *before* a child is born, for those should not be parents who will not prepare themselves for the duties of parenthood. The performance of this duty belongs to the entire course of family life.

And lest we ourselves forget, lest our children forget, the lessons are to be repeated perpetually, they are to be stereotyped in memory, they are to saturate the thoughts and sentiments and employments of every day. We are to *know* God's words and our children are to *know* them. "And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates."

O the loss, the incalculable, the shameful, the guilty loss, of not knowing God's words! O the cruel wrong, the heinous sin of not teaching them to our children! Why is this duty pressed upon us so imperatively, as if God would burn it into our minds, and hearts, and consciences? Because so much, for both worlds, depends upon its performance. Because the right knowledge of God's words—his will, his government, his grace, his salvation—is necessary to the welfare of our children in this world and their salvation in the next.

“Whom to know is life eternal!” What does he know who does not know God? What is knowledge that leaves out the knowledge of God? What is learning that forgets, or contemns, the truths of God? What is education—though a thousand diplomas certify its depth and variety—that neglects or despises the word of God? He knows most who knows God best; he is most learned who is most learned in the things of God; he is wisest who knows, not merely the most facts, but the most truth; he is best educated whose mind is most illumined by the light of Divine revelation, whose heart is most surely enshrined in the promises of God's grace, whose conscience is most responsive to the demands of God's law, whose life is most obedient to the requirements of God's will. Will we never learn our most sacred duty? Will we never know our best and noblest work? Will we

never know what is the chief good we can do our children—the richest heritage we can leave them?

No doubt we love them. We toil for them through winter and summer. We never rest. We think for them by day and dream of them by night. They fill our thoughts; they create our anxieties; they excite our hopes; they alarm our fears. But, alas! we love them in a blind sort of way—the love of higher instinct—when we do not know that for our children the best knowledge, and, indeed, the only indispensable knowledge, is the knowledge of God.

How early we send them to earthly schools! How carefully we choose their teachers! How we seek to make them wise in the use of words that they may speak well with their fellow-citizens in the gates! How we wish them to be skillful in the use of numbers that they may conduct their business successfully! And much other human learning we think indispensable to them. Our fond hearts are thrilled when our boys win applause for their youthful oratory, when our girls are complimented on their skill in music, or on their grace of manner. We spend money, time, and toil in giving them the knowledge of this world. And this is right, so far as it goes. We have neither word nor thought to discredit the true secular teacher, or to discount the value of a thorough scholastic education. But this is not all.

“ Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell ;
That mind and soul according well,
May make one music as before,
. . . But vaster.”

How many parents are solicitous about the worldly education of their children, but careless, forgetful, indifferent as to their education in Divine things ! How many thousands of children have lived through infancy, and early childhood, and adolescent youth, and have died and gone into the eternal world, who, if they bear with them any account of their parents must say, “ My father toiled for me, sent me to school, taught me business, but I never heard him pray ; he never told me of God, his government, or his grace ! ”

What bitter tears should flow, what lamentations should we wail out of our breaking hearts, when we stand by the cold clay of a darling child, dressed for its burial and gone from us forever, when we remember, “ He never heard me pray—I never taught him God’s word—I never led him to his Saviour ! ” Will we not conclude such a lamentation with this confession : “ I was no true father, no true mother to you, my wronged and neglected darling ! ” What a shadow the consciousness of such failure, of such neglect, must throw across the life of a parent who has, perhaps, done all that he could do for his child except this, of all others, most sacred, most necessary duty—to teach him the word of God !

We have often thought that there sobs out—as a pathetic undertone—in the lamentations of David, over rebellious and lost Absalom, the consciousness of some sacred parental duties neglected, or but partially performed. In Absalom's boyhood and youth David was sorely pressed with the cares of government. His enemies, pressing his kingdom on every side; his intractable and half-civilized people crowded his waking thoughts with anxieties, his dreams with cares and alarms. He had little time, during all this period, to watch over the morals of his children, to teach them God's words, or to train them in their duties. But Absalom—bright, beautiful, quick-witted, and ambitious—was not slow to learn. In the court and in the camp he soon learned the “words” of men, the ways of the world, but God was not in all his thoughts. In all his words and deeds Absalom shows himself simply a man of the world. By and by the penalty came, as, sooner or later, it always will and must come. David little knew what a storm was brewing, and when at last it burst upon his house it well-nigh broke his heart. The loving father's heart was sorely wrung when he thought of his idolized children. There was dishonored Tamar and dead Amnon—and by a brother's hand. And now, at last, after treason and all manner of wickedness, Absalom—so fondly loved, so petted, and so spoiled—hangs dead from the thick boughs of an oak in the dark “wood of Ephraim.” This

time victory brought no joy to David. Absalom—his beautiful and petted Absalom—is dead and lost—forever lost!

There is nothing sadder than David's lamentation, and, as it seems to us, his conscience bleeds with his heart as he wails out his sorrows in sobs and cries. "And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

Were it better never to have been born than to live to look on such a sight as wicked, ungrateful, impenitent, unpardoned, unprepared and lost Absalom, hanging dead in the "wood of Ephraim?"

That father who is too busy to teach his children God's words and to be the priest of his house is too busy for his soul's good—too busy to be a father. If his children, untaught and untrained in the ways of life, shall live without God and die without hope, be sure their blood will cry from the wet and sobbing earth against him. That father who is so borne down with honors and public cares that he cannot perform the duty of a father, is too great before men to be great before God. No cares of government—no necessities of civil or ecclesiastical position—modify or abridge the obligations that inhere in the very relation of fatherhood. If the king cannot rule his people and teach God's word

to his children, and be a true priest in his house, there is no room for debate; he must be no more king. There are fathers who should take this to heart. There can be in this world no more sacred relation than that of fatherhood; nothing in this world may come between a father and the duty he owes his child. Whatever hinders him in the discharge of his duty, that, if he truly fear God and wisely love his child, he will turn from and eschew. Whatever is left undone, the duties of fatherhood and motherhood must be done. And yet there are some parents who neither think nor care. They are of this world; they build, not on God's plan, but on their own, meager and false though it is. They assume to choose and to decide. They set God's claims aside, or subordinate them to the claims of business or pleasure! Audacious unbelief, damnable self-will!

Concerning those whose plan of life is so meager, so human, so selfish, so carnal, we might use St. Paul's terrible words in describing him who is only a citizen of this world: "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things."

And there are some parents—parents only in this one sense, they have been the instruments of bring-

ing children into this world—who are so consumed by personal ambition, so fascinated with worldly pleasures, that they have neither time nor heart for the instruction of their children. It is a pitiful and shameful sight to see a father so swallowed up by love of money, so consumed by ambition, that he has no time to teach his children the ways of wisdom and life. To see a mother—if such a one may be called a mother—so absorbed by pleasure and fashion that she has no deep maternal longings to carry her little ones in her arms to Jesus—to teach them the way of salvation—this is a shame and a crime for which there are no words.

Very strong and bold, but just and true, are the words of Dr. Robert South on this subject:—

“Let parents endeavor to deserve that honor which God has commanded their children to pay them; and believe it, that must be by greater and better offices than barely bringing them into this world; which of itself puts them only in danger of passing into a worse. And as the good old sentence tells us, that it is better a great deal to be unborn than either unbred or bred amiss, so it cannot but be matter of very sad reflection to any parent to think within himself that he should be instrumental to give his child a body only to damn his soul. And, therefore, let parents remember, that as the paternal is the most honorable relation so it is also the greatest trust in the world, and that God will be a certain

and severe exactor of it ; and the more so, because they have such weighty opportunities to discharge it, and that with almost infallible success.

“ Now these and the like considerations, one would think, should remind parents what a dreadful account lies upon them, for their children, by the laws of God and man, owe them the greatest reverence ; so there is a sort of reverence also that they as much owe their children : a reverence that should make them not dare to speak a filthy word, or to do a base or indecent action before them. What says our Saviour to this point ? ‘ Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones . . . it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea ! ’ And surely he who teaches the little ones to offend God, offends them with a witness ; indeed, so unmercifully, that it would be much the less cruelty of the two if the wretch, their father, should stab or stifle these poor innocents in their nurse’s arms. For then he might damn himself alone, and not his children also ; and himself, for his own sins only, and not for theirs too. . . .

“ These things I say, and a thousand more, parents are to be perpetually inculcating in the minds of their children, according to that strict injunction of God himself to the Israelites : ‘ These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart : and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy

children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.' Such discourses should open their eyes in the morning and close them in the evening."

CHAPTER XI.

TRAINING AS WELL AS TEACHING.

IT is not only our duty to *teach* our children what is right, we must also *train* them in the practice of what is right. "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." An eminent and judicious critic, Henry Cowles, in his notes on this passage, says: "The word for 'train up' means to educate, to confirm in a given course. The translation, 'in the way he should go,' is what we call *free*, departing considerably from the literal form of the original, yet not perhaps from its true sense. The original would naturally read, *after the manner of his way*; that is, train him with reference to his future way, in a manner corresponding to what his future is to be; which certainly may mean, to what you wish it to be, to what it ought to be. . . . Probably Solomon meant, shape the young twig as you would the future tree; give your child a culture for the after-life which you wish him to live."

Some good people have found a stumbling-block in this passage. They point to those who have, as they conceive, performed the condition; who have, as they say, "trained up their children in the way

they should go," but whose children have notoriously gone in the way they should not go. Where, then, suggests unbelief, is the promise? We greatly fear that many parents have insensibly fallen in with perhaps the most pernicious notion possible to be entertained by them on this subject—that it is, after all, a matter akin to chance at best. It makes little difference, the devil whispers, what you do. Those children that are going to be good, will be good any way; those that are going to be bad, will be bad in spite of all that you can do. Alas! that a notion so absurd, so false, so pernicious, should be entertained at all. It is absurd, for it is inconceivable, that a God of order, of wisdom, of goodness, of justice, has left our children to the sport of chance, or to the inexorable decrees of blind fate. It is false, for it contradicts experience, observation, sound sense, and the express teachings of the Holy Scriptures.

The words of Solomon are the statement of a principle. It agrees with every law we know of human life that right conduct should follow right training. And it is a broader principle than this—it is the statement of a universal truth; training—good or bad—determines the future conduct. It is not peculiar to right training that it results in right living, any more than it is peculiar to wrong training that it results in bad living. It is as broad as St. Paul's proposition: "Whatsoever a man soweth,

that shall he also reap." His succeeding propositions are contained in this broad and axiomatic statement: "For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

We would not go to any extreme length in the statement or application of this principle. It will not do to say, the child, rightly taught and trained, is *obliged* to do right, as if he *could not* do wrong. For no amount of right training interferes with volition. The rightly trained child is still free—free as the angels, "who kept not their first estate"—free as our first parents, who fell by disobedience in Eden. If a rightly trained child "departs" from "the way in which he should go," we may say of him,

"Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall."

Solomon speaks in the text not of a possible necessity, but of what we might call a probable certainty. It is not that a rightly trained child cannot depart from the "way he should go," but that he will not. He *can* if he will; but, though he can, he will not. It will not be his will to do so. Being trained aright, it is almost a moral certainty that he will *will* to do right.

But if, in any given case, there seems to be a contradiction between Solomon's text and the supposed facts; if a good man "tries hard," as he says, "to train his children aright," and they go astray, is it

not going very far—indeed, altogether too far—for him to say, “I *did* what the text enjoins, and my children have gone astray?” That his children *have* gone astray may be plain enough, but who will dare to say, “I *have done all my duty* in training them in the way in which they should go?” He would be, indeed, a bold man who, in such a case, would dare to affirm so much.

There is more in “training” than mere “teaching.” St. Paul says, “And, ye fathers,* provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Here we find discipline as well as instruction. Children are to be *drilled* as well as instructed in the right way. The soldier learns the use of his arms not simply by reading some “Manual” on the subject, or by being told how to use them, or how not to use them, but by drill in the use of them. The family is not merely a school, it is also a drill.

The mere enforcement of good conduct is not enough; the mere inculcation of sound principle is not enough. If we would truly “bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,” it is not enough that we simply teach them what is right, nor that we simply compel them to do what is right. True knowing, true doing, and true being, involve each other. They go together, and cannot,

* The mothers being included, also, as subject to the husbands, they being the fountains of domestic rule.—*Alford*.

without disappointment and defeat be separated. They are mutually corrective and conservative. The knowledge of duty ought to insure the doing of duty; while the doing of duty will surely enlarge and perfect the knowledge of duty. The psalmist teaches us that "the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." A greater than the psalmist has said, "If any man will do his will, [that is, *wills to do his will*,] he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." And St. Paul teaches us that he alone "proves"—that is, realizes in his own consciousness and experience—that God's will is "good, perfect, and acceptable," who thoroughly seeks to do that will.

Oversight or neglect of this double principle explains, in many instances, the apparent contradiction between efforts and results in the experience of some who have tried hard to rear their children aright, but whose failure to make good men and women out of them is sometimes as notorious as it is mournful. Some parents only teach what is right, and give themselves little concern about the performance, relying upon the power of truth alone; others compel performance, without taking the trouble to instruct, relying upon the habit of enforced obedience alone. In the first case, the instruction needs to be connected with *habits* of right doing; and if the habit be not induced, the mere

knowledge of duty is easily forgotten or overlooked, and the conviction of duty readily disappears before temptation to do wrong. In the latter, where there is only compulsion, rendered possible by the parent's superior strength and the child's dependence and subordination, there is nothing but a kind of force. It does not take hold upon the mind—the thoughts and sentiments—and no real habits of virtue are formed. As there is nothing but compulsion, when, by the lapse of years, the child is free from parental restraint, there is nothing left but a memory of what—for the want of instruction and nurture in sound principles—is recalled as a sort of slavery. In this case, the only centripetal force is parental compulsion. When the child is free, by attaining its majority, or by the death of the parent, the centrifugal forces of depraved nature have no corrective and no restraint, and the child very naturally flies from his orbit and goes wandering into the darkness—witherward no man knows. It is of the utmost importance that parents and teachers recognize and act upon this double principle. Then, with every ground of confidence, it may be expected that our children will, in all their future life, find that sound principles will regulate their conduct, and that good habits of life will imbed these principles in the mind, and that all the cardinal virtues will become, so to speak, part of their spiritual nature.

Something was said before about "habits." Who fully understands, who can fully expound the law of habit? What power there is in habit! Are not all men, for the most part, controlled by their habits? True, a man can will to cross the current of his habits, but it is rarely done. And when one does summon courage to make the attempt, it is often very like crossing a swollen stream with a frail canoe—there is a mighty drift, and the landing is not straight across from the starting point, but far below it.

He who forms a deeply set habit of thinking, feeling, and doing right, moves with the current of a mighty tide of life, and has good hope, through grace, of making a happy landing at last.

The law of habit has a far wider and more potential reign than most persons imagine. It sways its strong scepter over the physical, the intellectual, and the spiritual man. The bodily functions and appetites are under the law of habit. So is the intellect and the affections. We form habits of thinking and feeling, as well as of doing. And what is of unspeakable importance to consider and understand—habits *set* us in our ways, be they good or bad. "Habit," says St. Augustine, "if not resisted becomes necessity." Dr. Johnson has well expressed the same truth, "The diminutive chains of habit are seldom heavy enough to be felt, till they are too strong to be broken." And herein is the chief

danger—ruinous habits may be fastened upon us before we are fairly conscious of their existence. As Archbishop Whately has said, “It is important to keep in mind that habits are formed, not at one stroke, but gradually and insensibly ; so that, unless vigilant care be employed, a great change may come over the character without our being conscious of any.” Hence the wisdom of Locke’s caution, “Whoever introduces habits in children deserves the care and attention of their governors.” How irresistible our gradually and unconsciously formed habits may become is well illustrated by Bentham : “Like flakes of snow that fall unperceived upon the earth, the seemingly unimportant events of life succeed one another. As the snow gathers together, so are our habits formed. No single flake that is added to the pile produces a sensible change. No single action creates, however it may exhibit, a man’s character ; but as the tempest hurls the avalanche down the mountain, and overwhelms the inhabitant and his habitation, so passion acting upon the elements of mischief which pernicious habits have brought together by imperceptible accumulation, may overthrow the edifice of truth and virtue.”

In illustrating the power of habit, Miss Martineau tells us of a white infant who was captured by the Indians, and grew up among them, trained to their habits of life. He grew up, as did the Indian

boys, to think that he was the greatest man who had taken the greatest number of scalps. "While yet a youth he was rescued, and subsequently became a minister. During the Revolutionary War he held a pastorate near the scene of conflict. He went into the battle in his ministerial dress, but returned changed. A gentleman saw blood on his shirt and said, 'You are wounded!' The clergyman put up his hands as if to conceal the wound. The gentleman, thinking it ought to be looked to, pulled open his shirt, and from beneath it took out a bloody scalp! 'I could not help it,' said the victim of early habits. He ran to the Indians, and never again appeared among the whites."

It is infinitely better for a child never to form bad habits at all. If, in after years, he should, by the grace of God, be delivered from them, there is, as was noticed in another place, always a danger and a tendency in the currents of his life to seek the old channels again. John Foster, in one of his essays, says justly and forcibly: "I know from experience that habit can, in direct opposition to every conviction of the mind, and but little aided by the elements of temptation, (such as present pleasure, etc.,) induce a repetition of the most unworthy actions. The mind is weak when it has once given way. It is long before a principle *restored* can become as firm as one that has never been removed. It is as in the case of the *mound* of a reservoir: if this

mound has in one place been broken, whatever care has been taken to make the repaired part as strong as possible, the probability is, that if it give way again it will be *in that place*."

A bad habit becomes despotic. The Orientals portray the growth and power of such a habit by the following fable: "The story runs that as Abdallah lingered over his morning repast, a little fly lighted on his goblet, took a sip and was gone. It came again and again, increased its charms, became bolder and bolder, grew in size till it presented the likeness of a man. It consumed Abdallah's meat, so that he grew thin and weak, while his guest became great and strong. Then contention arose between them, and the youth smote the demon, so that he departed, and the youth rejoiced at his deliverance. But the demon soon came again, charmingly arrayed, and was restored to favor. On the morning the youth came not to his teacher. The mufti, searching, found him in his chamber, lying dead upon his divan. His visage was black and swollen, and on his throat was the pressure of a finger, broader than the palm of a mighty man. His treasures were gone. In the garden the mufti discovered the footprints of a giant, one of which measured six cubits."

We see the power of habit illustrated in the case of those who become, at last, not only reconciled to discomforts, but who reach such a point that they

find pleasure in them. Sir George Staunton, a British ambassador to the Court of China toward the close of the last century, told a singular story—that might be easily paralleled in the writings of modern travelers—that Colton has preserved. Colton says: “The late Sir George Staunton informed me that he had visited a man in India who had committed a murder; and in order not only to save his life, but, what was of much more consequence, his *caste*, he submitted to the penalty imposed. This was that he should sleep for seven years on a bedstead without any mattress, the whole surface of which was studded with points of iron resembling nails, but not so sharp as to penetrate his flesh. Sir George saw him in the fifth year of his probation, and his skin was then like the hide of a rhinocerus, but more callous. At that time, however, he could sleep comfortably on his ‘bed of thorns;’ and remarked that at the expiration of the term of his sentence he should most probably continue that system from choice which he had been obliged to adopt from necessity.”

With what yearning solicitude will Christian parents, who are wise to understand these things, strive to secure the formation of good habits in their children. And they cannot begin too soon. A mother once asked a man of wisdom, “At what age should I begin to teach my child?”

“How old is he now?” inquired the sage.

"Two years old," the mother answered.

"Then," said he, "you have already lost about two years."

Who will say that he was very far wrong, for we need not wait till our children understand all that we teach them. "Influence," says one, "far more than simple rules, secures and concerns parental discipline."

Undoubtedly, parents can, from the earliest infancy, bring their children under their influence. Before children can talk, the first steps can be taken in inducing the formation of some of the simple but cardinal virtues. Almost from the beginning of life—if we ourselves possess these virtues—we can begin to teach our children to be patient, punctual, orderly, obedient, generous, honest, truthful. As soon as a child is old enough to know the difference between scattering its clothes over the floor and putting them properly in place upon going to bed at night, it is old enough to begin to learn habits of neatness and order. And so of all the other virtues of this class. Surely we do not value as we should the importance of what most persons esteem the small virtues in the formation of good habits and of good character. "How carefully," says St. Francis de Sales, "we should cherish the little virtues which spring up at the foot of the cross!" When asked, "What virtues do you mean?" he replied, "Humility, patience, meekness, benignity, bearing one

another's burdens, condescension, cordiality, compassion; forgiving injuries, simplicity, candor—all, in short, of that sort of little virtues."

We know not, as we should, the conserving and harmonizing power of these orderly virtues. As sometimes one sweet voice, singing in perfect time and tune, may harmonize at last the dissonant voices of an ill-trained congregation, so one genuine virtue firmly established, one good habit fully formed, may hush the discords of an unregulated and disordered life.

In this work of training our children we cannot begin too soon, and we cannot strive with too great diligence or patience. Above all we cannot be too earnest in prayer to God for his good help in the most responsible, delicate, difficult and useful task ever committed to mortals—the task of "training up our children in the way in which they should go," and of "bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

In all our cares and strivings for our children let us strive above all things to bring them from the beginning under divine influences, and to induce them, at the very dawn of accountable life, to embrace Jesus as their Saviour and King. Without Christ all our teaching and all our drilling will be in vain.

Says the author of "*Apples of Gold*:" "It is the duty of every Christian, living in communion with

God, to bring up his children so that they shall be Christians from the beginning. The grace of God is given just as much during the progress of education and unfolding as afterward, during the process of deliberate volition in adult life; yea, more abundantly. You cannot, parents, bequeath to your children any thing that shall be equal to a heart alliance with God. It is very well to leave your child property; it is very well to leave him an honored name; it is very well to see him well-connected, affianced, and fill an honored place in society. Surround him with joy; scatter gold mines under his feet; span the crystal dome over his head; send the winged birds to sing for him of joy and peace; but you have done but little for him, he is but a bankrupt, unless there is added to all these an abiding faith in the life to come, and an abiding trust that for him there is a place among the sons of God. All is for naught if it does not lead him to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and to live for the world to come, and not for the world that now is. It is a very solemn thing to take God's children and attempt to rear them; but it is an awful thing to pervert them by bringing them up for this world, and utterly forgetful of the world that is to come. We are making slow work at converting; we must begin at the other end. Let us begin now to take care of little children."

CHAPTER XII.

WHAT HUMAN PARENTHOOD SHOULD SIGNIFY.

BUT *example* is the most successful and irresistible teacher. Parents who do wrong in the presence of their children may teach them what is right, and for a time compel obedience; but the evil that is in the example overbears and paralyzes the good that is in the instruction and the discipline.

We think too little of what we appear to be in the eyes of our little ones. For a long time—and we say it with reverence, for it is true—the parents stand, as it were, in the place of God to their little children. And they are God's representatives.

It is a solemn thought that parents are to serve a *typical* purpose. They should be types—meager and imperfect, it may be, yet true and not misleading—of the character of God. It is the duty of us all to trust, to love, and obey God. But the parent is the first object of faith to the child. The parent is also the first object of love. And to the parent the child yields its first conscious obedience. The parents are first known, first trusted, first loved, and first obeyed.

A child should learn the true conception of the divine Fatherhood from his earthly parents. God

is a governor, but he is a father also ; the parents are also governors. Authority, subordination, obedience, law—these ideas first come to a child from its earthly parents. We speak of philosophers who

“ Look through Nature up to nature’s God.”

And shall it not be so that our children can look through us up to the God and Father of us all?

This is no mere fancy, for God does reveal himself to us as Father. He is not merely like a father—he is a Father. When Jesus would teach us the true doctrine of prayer he appeals to the universal instincts of childhood and parenthood. It is impossible that any child, any parent, should fail to understand him. “ Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you : for every one that asketh receiveth ; and he that seeketh findeth ; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone ? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent ? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him ! ” And in many places in the Scriptures is the great God represented to us as a father. “ Behold,” says St. John, “ what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” And our Lord Jesus, in

the last words preceding his passion, said to his disciples: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions. . . . I go to prepare a place for you." St. Paul, in describing the relation a true believer sustains to God, bases his whole doctrine on the same truths: "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God."

The following passage from Young's "Christ of History" will be appropriate and useful at this point:—

"'How is God connected with *me*? How is he affected toward me?' are questions of infinite interest to a rational being. The answer of the Teacher of Nazareth to these questions is simple and explicit, and is conveyed in a single word, a word of profound significance and surpassing tenderness—the word Father. To man this term belongs emphatically, and it is one of the wealthiest in human language, and men at least can have no difficulty in comprehending all its meaning. The relation which it indicates has no such interpretation, among other intelligent creatures, as it finds in this word. There is no fatherhood or childhood among angels, no derivation of being from one to the other. But men

on earth are connected together in this extraordinary sense; and from the imperfect type existing among themselves, they at least are able to rise to the supreme reality in God. The human spirit is the offspring, the immediate and direct offspring, of the everliving Spirit. It is capable of bearing and does bear, and it is the only thing that bears or is capable of bearing, a resemblance to God. When we have said that God created the heavens, the earth, and material things, we have exhausted all of which the subject admits. But it is not simply true that he created minds also—*He is the Father of minds*, and of nothing else. . . . God is a King, but he is a Father-king; his subjects are his own children, and his government of them in its very origin, and consequently in its essential spirit, in all its laws, and in all its acts, is strictly and only parental. God's kingdom is a *figure*, his Fatherhood is the profoundest reality. He may justly, and in certain respects, be compared to a king; but he is a Father."

Now what idea of the divine Fatherhood will children receive from parents who themselves, turning from the good and right way, follow the way of sin and folly and men? If there is sin in the parents; if they keep not the law of love; if they fear not God; if they walk not in the way of his commandments, how slowly and with what difficulty will their children ever learn the true idea of God!

Because parents occupy the very extraordinary and sacred relation that binds them and their children together—a relation, as we have seen, that obtains nowhere else in the intelligent universe—they do most undoubtedly, for a time at least, stand in the place of God to their children. They are his representatives. They are, therefore, not only to teach the truth and to drill their children in duty, but they themselves must illustrate the truths they teach and exemplify the duty they enjoin. By the sobriety, wisdom, justice, truthfulness, unselfishness, patience, purity, love, and tenderness of their own lives, let them interpret to the understanding and the faith of their children the true conception of God's fatherhood. So far as means are concerned, the first revelation made to a child's mind of the existence and greatness of God comes through its parents, and this not so much through what they say, as through the child's sense of their greatness and goodness. "The order," says Harris in his "Patriarchy," "in which the love of the child graduates, is from the stage of instinctive love to moral affection, and from this to the love of its heavenly Parent. Desirous as the parents may be to lead its affections up at once to the Creator, the previous stages of the path must first be passed through. For awhile the maternal care is the only Providence it knows; and the father's experience a world of grand enterprise, and of power unlimited. In vain

it strives to climb the height of his knowledge--his virtual omniscience; nor can it conceive of a Diviner guarantee than his promise. To see its parents bend in worship, and to hear them speak with holy awe of their Father in heaven, is itself solemn and suggestive as a ladder set up from earth to heaven. The wise discipline, too, which leads the parent kindly to repress its selfish desires, and constantly to aim at its moral welfare, invariably begets in return the highest order of filial love and confidence; evincing the power of the child to discriminate between instinctive and moral affection, and preparing it to embrace that heavenly Parent of whom the earthly is but the imperfect representative. And let the parents remark that, from the moment they begin to point their child to God as an object of reverence and love, they are pursuing the certain course for augmenting its moral affection for themselves; while its intelligent love for them is a valuable means and a pledge for its ascending to the love of God. . . . When the human infant comes into the world, it resembles a temple on the day of opening. Ten thousand objects are waiting and eager to enter, but the doors must first be thrown open. One after another they unfold, and in crowd the throngs. Day after day they repeat their visit, with multitudes of new faces added to them. At first, all are admitted without question, pass-word, or hinderance. In full faith, the soul is laid open,

and the streams flow through it. After awhile, a higher order of applicants press for admission, and the young human being begins to look round for *authority*. Proof is, as yet, out of the question; the highest proof is authority, and the highest authority the parental. The example of his parents guarantees alike his belief and his conduct. His trust in them becomes obedience to their injunctions, and a sense of duty takes root."

It seems too plain a truth for argument, that parents are under a very great and peculiar obligation to be holy. If, as we have seen, they are, for a time and in some sense, in the place of God to their children—how awful their responsibility, how great their opportunity, and how terrible their sin if they be unfaithful! And yet, alas! there are parents who reflect not God's but Satan's image upon the hearts of their little children. How sad and ruinous it is, when parents who, of all others, should "live, and move, and have their being" in the midst of holy influences, live under an inspiration of sin and carnal-mindedness! How portentous of ruin to both parents and children!

Sometimes God-fearing parents are overwhelmed with a sense of the responsibilities of their position and they are tempted to despair, exclaiming, with painful consciousness of their lack of wisdom and strength, "Who then is sufficient for these things?"

This we say in answer and without doubt of its

truth: Unaided by Divine grace, unenlightened by Divine wisdom, the great duties of parenthood cannot be rightly and fully discharged. No "rules" for family government, no set of maxims, no amount of instruction, no vigor or regularity of drill, can compensate for the lack of true personal godliness in the parents. The first condition of the full and successful discharge of our parental obligations is devotedness to God. If we have the spirit of Christ, if we be led by that spirit, if we be full of that spirit, then we have the first and chief condition of doing *the very best that we can do*.

Of course we do not overlook or undervalue those natural qualities, as they may be called, of good judgment, patience, firmness, justice, and benevolence, that are so needful in all good family government, but we do mean to say that no excellence in these qualities is sufficient without religion, and that religion makes the best natural endowments tenfold more efficient.

The course of our discussion leads naturally to three conclusions as to the duty and work of the father—the same principles applying to the mother also—if he is to be what God designed him to be, a representative and interpreter of the divine Fatherhood.

First. He must *know* God's words himself.

Second. He must *drill himself* in obedience to these words.

Third. He must be a man of *prayer*.

He must know God's words himself. "These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart." This goes before the words, "and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children." We cannot teach what we do not know, and we cannot know what we do not search out. "Search the Scriptures," is a Divine command. They "testify" of Christ, and in them we find "eternal life." The motive is of the most persuasive and controlling character; but it is too plain a question to argue now. He who does not know that it is his duty to "search" a book that God gave him for his guidance through this world to a better, knows nothing; and argument—how strong, wise, eloquent soever—cannot help him.

The word of God is to be learned by earnest, patient, persistent, prayerful study, and not otherwise. There is no charm about the volume—a sort of better fetish—so that keeping it about the house, or on the center-table, will make it useful. So kept and so abused—for not to use the Bible is to abuse it—it will do us no more good than any other volume. A volume of patent-office reports, or census tables, or of the last century's almanacs, or any other dry-as-dust compilation, will do as much good as an unused Bible. An Egyptian papyrus, an Assyrian brick or cylinder, covered over with indecipherable hieroglyphics, would be as useful as a Bible, though

bound in embossed leather and clasped with gold not read and prayed over.

It has pleased God, in his gracious and wise providence, for the good of men, to secure the publication of his blessed word in many tongues. And it is now brought within the reach of every person who wishes to have it. What a priceless privilege is this! Each person may have, for his own use, a complete copy of the sacred Scriptures. And this fact deepens our obligation to "search the Scriptures"—to know, to understand, to believe, to love, and to obey them.

It is the duty of parents, and made their duty by the imperative command of God, to teach the Scriptures "diligently unto their children." This they cannot do without knowing the Scriptures; they cannot know them without earnestly studying them. No imaginable excuse for the neglect of this duty can be good. Does one say, "I cannot read?" It is his duty to learn. Does he say, "I have not time?" This is not true, for he has all the time there is—twenty-four hours in every day. If he has made himself so busy with his farm, his shop, his merchandise, his pleasures, or his ambition that he cannot find time to study the word of God, then he is too busy with these things for the good of his soul here or its safety hereafter. Such absorption in this world's affairs as hinders or prevents the discharge of divinely-appointed duties

is not simply a mistake, an error, a fault—it is a *sin*.

Is it the parent's duty to *drill* his children in the ways of God? Then he must *drill himself*. What good is done by the drill-sergeant who lectures the soldiers upon their unsoldierly attitudes and management of their arms when he himself constantly does the very things he censures in them? "Stand erect" comes with poor grace from an officer who himself leans forward with drooped shoulders and listless air. Would we teach our children patience and drill them in this great virtue? Then we must ourselves be patient. Would we have them grow up to be generous? We must be generous. Would we have them honest, truthful, chaste, reverent? We must exemplify these virtues. And in every case it is so: we must be "ensamples" to our children in all good things. We may indeed "point to brighter worlds," but we must also "lead the way." How wretched must be his failure who assumes to teach God's "words" when he has never learned them, nor tried to learn them! Who would drill his children in virtues in which he himself is not disciplined! It cannot be that we can teach our children truths we have not learned, or train them in those virtues which we ourselves do not possess. If all had to be compressed into one sentence, one might say, "If you would do all your duty to your children, learn all you can of God's word,

and, in your experience, realize all you can of God's grace."

The true parent, who feels as he ought his great burden of responsibility; who understands that he is, in an important and true sense, in the place of God to his little children; that it is his high and sacred duty to show them something of God's Fatherhood reflected in himself; who knows, also, that to be to his children what he ought to be, he must not only be a man wise in the Scriptures, but a man disciplined in the virtues; such a parent will feel that, to do and to be all these things, he must be a man of prayer.

What father—what mother is there who does not feel the need of Divine help? If such there be, failure is foredoomed. Here many great, many wise have failed. No man can feel secure who, like the writer, has not yet fully solved the problem and finished the task—whose children are still about him, with principles unfixed, habits unsettled, character unformed. Many have tried and have failed.

Shall we also fail? It were better never to have been born than to be the father of lost children.

Praise be to God! Those four blessed ones of ours that were gathered to God in the sweet innocence of infancy, they, at least, are safe. Their feet will never slip; they will never go astray. No shipwreck can await them; but as to the rest—those that

God spares to us, puts in our care and keeping, the future—but we know not the future.

Well may parents pray for light and strength, and grace divine that they may fill the place God called them to fill—do the work he gave them to do, and be to their children what he intended them to be—true teachers of righteousness, and true patterns of godliness. He who has succeeded in training his children in the way in which they should go; who has brought them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,—may not be rich in gold or great in name, yet he deserves, and he will receive, the congratulations of the wise and of the good. And him will children's children rise up and bless.

But he who has failed in his office and duty of fatherhood; who has not taught God's words to his children; who has not trained them in the way in which they should go; who has not brought them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,—he may be rich in gold and great in name, but he has made the worst failure a man can make, who himself escapes hell, for he has failed in the holiest trust that can be committed to human keeping.

Very sad is the condition of the father of lost children. His fault merits censure, but his wretchedness should excite pity. The good and wise cannot praise him, for he has left undone the greatest work that a man can do in this world. Neither

Church nor State can thank him, for he has cursed both by turning loose upon society a race of bad men and women. His children cannot bless him in the gates, for all that he has done for them is that he has been the means of bringing them into one bad world that becomes their passage to a worse.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOME INFLUENCES.

WHERE parents do their duty as teachers of God's "words" and exemplifiers of godliness, by bringing up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," and where the children "obey their parents in the Lord," there grows around, about, and within such people that indescribable something we may call *a Christian home*. We propose in this chapter some remarks upon the true home as an important element of all high and pure civilization.

And what is a true home? That blessed reality which this sweet word expresses is easily understood when realized, but it is incapable of a strict and limited definition.

One—the pure but unfortunate Mrs. Hemans—who seems not to have known the reality, asks,

"What is home, and where, but with the loving?"

We may well believe that where the "loving" are not there can be no such thing as a true home. And this suggests one of the most blessed facts of human experience: it is in the power of true love to overcome all external disadvantages, and to create happy homes in the midst of poverty and hardship. We

will find them all over the world—under arctic skies as well as in the land of flowers—in stately palaces and lowly cabins—in crowded cities and on the border of deserts. But all homes are not alike. Some are better than others. Some contain more of the elements that are necessary to constitute a perfect home.

Fine-spun theories would be out of place in our argument and tedious description would be unprofitable. We may speak very briefly of a few general facts and principles which, however simple and easy of comprehension, are yet too often overlooked and undervalued. One thing to be considered thoughtfully by us all, and too little, we venture to think, regarded in our country, is this: a perfect home cannot exist without a "local habitation and a name." Homes are not nomadic. The love of an Arab for his tent and of a sailor for the sea are but poor substitutes for those divinely implanted affections which, ivy-like, grow from the roots and twine themselves about the roof-tree of a true Christian home. No homeless man or family, no wanderers from place to place, can become all that with a home they might have been.

Again, and of no small importance, if we are to have perfect homes, it is well that each family have a proprietary right in its place of residence. This sentiment has nothing in common with that agrarian wickedness which has so often proposed to

rob the industrious and frugal to bolster up the idle and wasteful, and that has sometimes blotted out, in fire and blood, the homes of the good because it could not bear the sight of their happiness. Of communism—a fanaticism whose zeal for equality is born of selfishness, whose methods are lunatic, whose inspiration is devilish, and whose experiments have been only and utterly disastrous—the Christian home is at once the antagonist, the preventive, and the cure.

If we cannot have a home in our own right, our misfortune cannot justify envy of the more favored, or excuse impatience or repining at our lot in life. But whoever has, or expects to have, a family, should cherish, earnestly and religiously, the desire and the purpose to have a hearth-stone of his own. It is a very great blessing if a man's home be in his own house, and especially if it be his as the reward of honest toil. The man who has won a home for himself and his family as the fruit of manly labor has achieved a great and true success.

As it seems to us, much depends on the people's having homes—far more than most persons seem to suppose. That government is wisest and best that multiplies, fosters, and preserves the home of its people. After all, if the object of government should be to secure "the greatest good of the greatest number," should not the homes of the people be the chief concern of Government? Laws

and administrations that hinder the people from creating homes are bad, and in the long run will, as they should, prove themselves self-destructive. There are, we may be sure, other and better measures of a nation's greatness than the splendor and populousness of its cities, or the extent of its commerce; there are better tests of good government than the power of its navies, or the number and valor of its soldiers. It does seem too plain to need evidence or argument, that the nation which has the largest number of happy Christian homes is the most prosperous—as determined by every measure of true prosperity—and that the government which most effectually—by the wisdom of its laws and the righteousness of their administration—by the conscientiousness with which it confines itself to its legitimate sphere and keeps itself from arbitrary interference in the sphere of individual and family life—secures happy, Christian homes to the people, is the best government. For the real powers that form nations—shaping their history and determining their destiny—are social; for as communities make nations, families make communities.

As we have seen, in the earlier discussions of this work, the State, as well as the Church, has its foundations in the family. If the State forgets this, we have anarchy; when the Church forgets it, it is apostasy. Having homes—and homes that are in their own houses—helps to make people orderly and

law-abiding, industrious and virtuous, conservative and patriotic, and so builds up the State; having homes helps also to make them religious, and so, handing down the truth of God from generation to generation, according to the chosen plan of heaven, preserves, extends, and perpetuates the Church.

The importance of this whole subject, as related to the individual, the family, the community, the Church and the State, will appear if we consider the strength of our home instincts and affections, the controlling power of their influence upon children, and, therefore, their determining power in molding the society of the future. No affections are so universal, so intense, so enduring as those which cluster about our homes. Their existence and influence do not depend upon circumstances of age, or character, or position. These may modify them, as to their intensity and character, but they survive them all.

Who forgets his home? Not the wanderer. There is Jacob fleeing from the face of wrathful Esau, and during long years of wasting toil with Laban the Syrian clinging but to this fond hope: "So that I come again to my father's house in peace." The old, whose feet may even now be pressing the border-land between two worlds, do not forget. How dear, sainted grandmother used to forget recent events and new acquaintances, but never forget the green meadows, nor the spring that went laughing

from the foot of the hill—the rose-tree in the garden, nor the old oaks in the yard, with all the precious memories of her childhood's home in grand old Virginia, away back in the time when Washington and his barefooted heroes were braving the hardships of Valley Forge, and another hero, as great and noble as the Father of his country, our apostolic Asbury, was traversing a thinly-settled continent, preaching Christ to the people and founding a Church for the ages—a messenger of peace and a herald of salvation.

When David was returning to Jerusalem after the defeat of rebellious Absalom, Barzillai, an aged Gil-eadite, who had showed the king and his band of faithful followers much kindness the day they fled before the face of the traitor, joined him on his return, and accompanied him with an escort of honor part of the way to his capital. Grateful David begged the old man to go on with him to Jerusalem and promised to reward him like a king. Barzillai's reply speaks a language that all hearts will understand: "Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and of my mother."

Nor does the prodigal, who has "wasted his substance with riotous living," forget. The remembrance of his "father's house" brought penitential tears to eyes unused to weep, and the light of life to a spirit that had long wandered in darkness. "And

when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father."

Disaster cannot destroy the power of this sacred instinct and affection. See the crew of the "Advance"—with brave and true Dr. Kane—blocked in by Arctic ice during the dreary darkness of two polar winters. See them fighting against their fate—cheerful and brave when life had become a burden—or, steadily though painfully, dragging their little boats over the ice, or working their way among the dissolving "floes," over a thousand miles of frozen and stormy sea. And what, next to the grace of God, sustained them? They thought and talked of their homes during all their waking hours, and dreamed, when they slept for an hour in the shadow of icebergs that seemed—so white and pitiless were they—to mock their desolation, that they were at home again, while they talked in their sleep joyful responses to the welcome of wives and the prattle of children. True to the life—as all good hearts must feel—is Tennyson's picture of Enoch Arden, cast upon an island and left alone, in the wide Pacific, far from England and his love for long and dreary years.

"There often, as he watched, or seemed to watch,
So still, the golden lizard on him paused,
A phantom, made of many phantoms, moved

Before him, haunting him, or he himself
Moved haunting people, things and places known
Far in a darker isle beyond the line ;
The babes, their babble, Annie, the small house,
The climbing street, the mill, the leafy lanes,
The peacock-yewtree, and the lonely Hall,
The horse he drove, the boat he sold, the chill
November dawns and dewy-glooming downs,
The gentle shower, the smell of dying leaves,
And the low moan of leaden-colored seas."

Affections like these—so universal, so intense, so indestructible—must be divinely implanted. They are intended to exercise a controlling influence in molding human character. In shaping the destiny of individuals and of society they are all but omnipotent. Every thing that relates to them, that can regulate or pervert them, is of the last importance to us all. And shall powers like these be overlooked, or undervalued, or misunderstood, in our estimate of the creative, regulative, and regenerative forces that are to form or to restore society? Shall we regulate and utilize them according to the dictates of sound reason and of divine inspiration, or leave them to accident, or surrender them to caprice? Who does not know that the future destiny of the Church and of the State is now being woven in the noiseless but unresting looms of the family and the home? The family, not the fates, determine destiny. The destiny of a people is not settled by the defeat of one great political party or the triumph of another—by presidents or Congress—but by the

powers that sway their scepter about the fireside—by those influences that shape and fix the character of little children.

We count it a benefaction to the race when some gifted and patient man shows us how to control and employ more perfectly the great powers of nature. We build monuments to Franklin and Morse for telling us what the lightning is and for making it the obedient servant of our wants. We call him a benefactor who develops a new industry; we offer rewards and hold expositions to encourage inventions. If one can show us how to be rich and great and prosperous, we call him wise, bless him as a friend, and crown him with honors. But is there not something more important to us than any or all of these things? For what are the influences that make us all what we are? that make, or mar, our mortal and immortal fortunes? What are the influences that form and determine the character and, therefore, the destiny of our children? The silent but potent energies that originate in the family relation—intertwisted with all the ties that bind us together—that begin their work with the first motherly caress that soothes a baby's cry, that work on through all changes of condition and that leave us not till we have left this world—if indeed they do not continue with us forever—these have made us what we are, these will determine what our children shall be.

We do well to honor the great and unselfish patriots, like the Prince of Orange, for whom "little children cried in the streets," when he died ; like our own Washington, whom all good men loved while he lived, and whom all men praised when he was dead. And we do well to honor the great reformers—like Luther, and Knox, and Wesley, and others of kindred spirit—"of whom the world was not worthy"—whose courage and faith delivered the Church in the days of darkness and danger, or led the way to new triumphs of the truth. How much the world owes them eternity alone will reveal.

But if it shall be the will of heaven to give us a man or woman who will read aright the purpose of God in instituting the family ; who will fully understand why in a world exposed to temptation, under the curse of sin, and that must be redeemed to be saved, it pleased God not to people it as he did heaven with angels by direct creations—so that there is no marriage, nor fatherhood, nor motherhood, nor childhood, nor kinship among them all, but rather, by the births of generation after generation, making children dependent on their parents during many helpless years, segregating the population of the earth into families and yet binding them all together, by ten thousand ties that make the race but one ; who will, by the earnest study of God's word, and by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, understand all these things and then teach us the full

measure of our responsibilities; who will not only teach us, but arouse our conscience to a full sense of our obligation to train our children for the kingdom of Christ Jesus; who will also show us how we may most perfectly discharge our sacred family duties—that man, or that woman, will we hail as chief among prophets and apostles who have blessed the world. And if such a teacher and guide could induce all fathers and mothers to employ the great powers of the family and the home, as God wills them, to be used, he would reform the world.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CHRISTIAN HOME.

GOD holds parents responsible for the influences exerted by the homes they originate.

To begin with the best understood of our parental duties, we may mention what does not need discussion:—

First. Parents are to provide for the maintenance and comfort of their children. It is theirs to provide food, and raiment, and shelter. Who does not—if Paul be authority—“hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”

Secondly. The obligation to provide for the intellectual wants of our children is as manifest and binding as the obligation to feed them, and it is enforced by higher motives. Some day this will be understood, and the father who can, but will not, educate his children, will feel himself disgraced. How blind, how foolish, how cruel, how unjust, is that father who can educate his children and will not—who refuses them opportunity to get themselves ready for the duties of manhood! And it is all the worse since the opportunities of youth come but once. As Carlyle says, in one place, “Nothing ever happens but once in this world. What I do

now I do once and forever. It is over, it is gone, with all its eternity of solemn meaning."

Denying a child the opportunity of education is worse than ordinary robbery, for it is a wrong that can never be atoned for. It robs the child of his seed-time, and limits, mars, and blights his harvest. No gifts of gold or land can atone for such a wrong. It is a personal injury, inflicted on the helpless, and by the hand that of all others owed blessing and not blighting.

The writer at this point, in place of argument, will tell what he saw some years ago.

Attending a Quarterly Conference, it so happened that we spent two nights and a day with a brother whose name did not suit him, and so we will call him Brother Blind. He was a hard worker, and this was creditable. His wife was like-minded with himself. Their industry and economy had brought them more than competence. Brother Blind owned a beautiful and fertile farm, and, as we rode to his house from the railroad, he explained to us how he proposed, during the year, to buy more land that "lay convenient." There was one daughter and three sons in the family; the eldest boy about sixteen years old. They were exceptionally bright and well-formed. The children were well-behaved, quiet, and mannerly, giving marked attention to all that was said in their presence. All day Saturday the rain poured down, and we were hindered

from going to Church. After reading our Bible a long while, and after spending an hour or two in writing for one of our Church papers, we began an exploration of our brother's house to see what books he had. Here follows the inventory: A Bible, a worn hymn book, one very old copy of a "Life of George Whitefield" with another's name in it, a few spelling books, primary geographies, and such like, and one copy of the "Patent-Office Reports," sent by some congressman, who hoped to get his vote in the next election.

There was *one other* book in the house, hid behind some slates and school books. It was a Mormon novel, full of obscene pictures and vulgar stories. This last the boys had borrowed. The boys we pitied—the father we blamed. The boys were quick-witted and hungry to read, and this swine's-food, from the tree of Satanic literature, had fallen into their hands. So far as we know Brother Blind kept on hoarding to buy more land. And it is not unlikely that his poor boys, having tasted the poisonous fruit, went on eating till all purity and honor perished out of their souls. It will be an infinite mercy and a miracle of grace if that vulgar and accursed novel of Mormon beastliness do not yet damn the children of this blind father, who hoarded money to buy land he did not need, who kept his children from learning more than enough to "cipher out" the value of their crops, who denied

them the pleasure and profit of good books and of judiciously selected newspapers. Surely it would be pardonable to feel contempt for the stinginess, as it would be a duty to commiserate the blindness of such a father.

Thirdly. Besides providing for the general intellectual training and furnishing of our children to the best of our ability, there are *æsthetic* wants—emotions of beauty, sentiments of taste to be provided for. These wants, and the capacities they imply, are common, in greater or less degree, to us all. God gave to the human spirit the power to recognize and enjoy all beautiful things, as he gave it the power to recognize and love all loveliness. To say to this divinely implanted instinct of beauty that it shall close its eyes to all beautiful things, is to speak treason to one of our purest and noblest inspirations. God, who made the eye for the light and the light for the eye, has given to man, whom he made in his own image, the sense of beauty, and, in order to satisfy it, has scattered beautiful things in rich profusion all around him.

Ruskin has truly taught us, that where we find in the creation one adjustment for simple utility, we find twenty for beauty. Did not God himself raise up, from the midst of his brethren, the beauty-seeing and skillful Bezaleel to devise rare ornaments for the tabernacle? And does not the Lord himself declare that they had their place in the appoint-

ments of his earthly habitation "for glory and for beauty?" Is not the Church commended for her beauty? The psalmist sings, "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. . . . Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined." And St. John, in the visions of the apocalypse, describes the New Jerusalem, that he saw "descending out of heaven from God," as radiant with a Divine beauty that could not be told. We do not read the book of nature or the book of revelation aright, if we fail to see something of the infinite pains that our gracious God has taken to lift us above all unworthy things by filling earth and heaven with beauty. Beautiful things are ministers of grace, if we will only receive them.

That we are beginning to understand these things, that we are seeking, in some small degree, to provide for the æsthetic wants of our children, may be taken as an evidence of progress in our theories of education. If, sometimes, a taste for beautiful things is gratified unwisely; if, sometimes, devotion to art has been found in unnatural and unholy alliance with materialistic unbelief; and if, too often, the great masters of art, with eyes open to all natural, but closed to all spiritual beauty, have lent their genius to prostitute painting and sculpture to gratify the prurient tastes, and to pamper the licentious habits of indolent and overfed communities—all

these things only show how needful it is that Christian education should be wise and liberal enough to so provide for these wants, and to so regulate these tastes, that our inborn love of beautiful things shall lead us to seek, with quenchless desire, that beauty of which all other is but the shadowy and imperfect symbol, "the beauty of holiness."

Fourthly. It may be useful, in this connection, to consider briefly another important, but often overlooked duty—the duty of providing for the *emotional* wants of our children. In common speech the *heart* represents the affections. Now, the heart is capable of culture; its sympathies and affections may be educated. Love is as capable of culture as is the memory or the imagination. So is every passion, good or bad, that belongs to our nature. In the very constitution of our complex nature God has provided for this, making every power—physical, intellectual, and spiritual—capable of culture, and, for its true development and highest uses, dependent on culture. The athlete, who seeks the utmost development of physical strength, understands this law, as related to the lower part of our nature. To accomplish his purpose, he requires appropriate food and exercise, and he will fail if either condition be lacking. That the intellect is capable of culture, and that the conditions of its normal and vigorous growth are food and exercise, appropriate to its nature and wants, has long been unquestioned. Out

of the recognition of this truth have grown the world's schemes of education; which, let us hope, the experience of ages is helping us to improve, and which, if we are ever to improve, we will acknowledge to be very far from perfection.

And that wonderful thing—defying analysis, and impatient alike of the rigid formulas of logic and of the subtle distinctions of philosophy—the human heart, with all that is highest and deepest in its hopes and fears, its joys and sorrows, its loves and hates, its good and bad, is capable of culture. And the conditions of its culture are not unlike the laws of bodily and mental growth, but more manifold and complicated in their relations, and more difficult, perhaps only because less understood, in their application. The possibility and desirableness, nay, necessity of heart culture, the Bible teaches. Sound reason and experience confirm and illustrate the truth of the doctrine. Those spiritual qualities which, on the one hand, as the “fruits of the Spirit,” determine and measure our resemblance to God, and, on the other, as the “works of the flesh,” show our estrangement from him—all these come under the general law of culture and development that finds, on the spiritual side of our nature, its widest and most potential reign.

These views do not contravene, in the least degree, the evangelical doctrine that all good is the “gift of God,” and all grace the “fruit of the Spirit.”

They recognize this truth, and find in its blessed reality all that is bright and hopeful in our never-ending conflict with the "powers of darkness." The truth is, co-operation with God is the condition of all spiritual growth, and no heart can be truly educated, its powers led out into harmonious development, its noblest possibilities of blessedness realized, that is a stranger to God and to the experience of his grace.

How important—how infinitely important—is the heart-education of our children! But how few consider this, or understand it, or strive, or pray that the great duty may be performed—the great result accomplished! And yet, the most important education possible to our probationary existence is the education of the heart! We do not mean only the conversion of our children, but what we have said, their heart-education—their heart-culture. Alas! there is so much yet to be learned by those of us whose office it is to teach.

We may conclude this chapter with a few remarks concerning some of the important ends which parents, with ceaseless endeavor, should strive, in the use of all right means, to realize in the sphere of the Christian home.

We must make our homes happy. Fine, or luxurious, they may not, need not be, but happy they must be, at whatever cost. Nor gold, nor power, nor fame, can buy or command a substitute for this.

If home-happiness could be bought like estates, the gold of all the Rothschilds would be a poor price to pay for this inestimable blessing. The lack of it is sorrow upon sorrow, and woe upon woe. The lack of it makes aching hearts, that all the pleasures and riches and honors in the world cannot soothe. O, it is mockery, delusion, shame, and madness when husbands and fathers turn from their homes to seek satisfaction in the glitter of gold, the charms of power, the fascinations of strange and unhallowed pleasures; when wives and mothers, ignorant of the true glory and blessedness of their lives, forgetful of the holiest of all the holy duties of womanhood, and recreant to the most sacred trusts God ever committed to human hands, leave the pure delights that make every true home a "Paradise Regained," and seek contentment in the whirl and frivolity of capricious fashion; when sons and daughters find, in the revelry of the outside world, attractions that outbid the endearments of home.

Passing through the streets of a Southern city one day we saw a poor laboring man lift up his little girl, as he passed out of the gate, and kiss her a kind good-bye. That was the best thing in his whole day's work, although he knew it not.

We parents should labor and pray to make the "father's house" the last place our children wish to leave, and the place where they would like to die. Let it be to our children so happy a place that it

shall haunt their latest dreams ; that its sweet tones shall sound in their hearts when they are away at school, or gone out from us into the wide world beyond ; that its blessed memories, following them through the smiling valleys of their prosperity and along the rough paths of their adversity, shall bring them back to us when sorrow has bowed them down, or temptation overtaken them. He whose heart is stayed in the sweet charities and holy faith of a happy Christian home may have many sorrows and disappointments, but he cannot be wholly crushed by adversity. He may be "troubled on every side," yet he will not "be distressed;" he may be "perplexed," but he will not be "in despair;" he may be "persecuted," yet he cannot be "forsaken;" he may be "cast down," yet he cannot be "destroyed."

Again, and advancing our argument to a higher place, we must make our homes *sacred*. That they are cultivated and happy is not enough ; to be perfect they must be sacred. And a Christian home is sacred, for it is a dwelling place of God. If we dig among the ruins of the dead and buried cities of the ancients, we will find memorials of their household worship. Even they had their household gods—even they had some sort of religion. But we do not want such homes as these, or as any of the modern substitutes which are proposed in the place of true Christian homes. Christianity, not the rites

of pagan idolatry; the knowledge of God, not the discoveries of science; religion, not the charms of poetry, or the refinements of art; the spirit of Jesus within us, and the truth of Jesus making us free from sin, and not what is called the progress of civilization, can make our homes sacred. Christianity only, but Christianity fully, meets the highest and deepest wants of our nature. All the evil that is in us, it can take away; all the good we are capable of, it can implant and nurture. The gospel plan of life is divinely perfect, for it comprehends and provides for all the wants and exigencies of our race in this world and in the world to come. And this blessed Gospel of Christ must be the law of life to the family, as well as to the individual. Husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, must learn from Christ the duties of their place, and receive from him grace to discharge them.

All the truth in the world, outside the word of God, cannot substitute one truth that is peculiar to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is not too much truth in the Gospel, as there is not too much light and heat in the sun. We can spare none of it, and yet there is enough for every duty, every relation, every condition of life. Every virtue and every grace that can establish and adorn the family life finds its root and support in the Gospel of Christ. The family that would live by another than the law of Christ robs itself of the most exalted

privilege and truest blessedness possible to humanity here below. And that home, whether it be in a king's palace or in a slave's cabin, where Jesus is most truly the Lord of all hearts, and the pattern of all lives, is most like heaven—the home of the good who have entered into rest—of all places in the world.

Would God that we would make our homes sacred in the eyes of our children! And, if we will, we may. Once only does childhood, does youth come; it is the parent's opportunity. Let him use it well; it comes no more. By and by our day will end, and we will be "gathered to our fathers." Then, when we are dead and gone, our children will remember, among the earliest experiences of childhood they can recall, the family altar, standing with its perpetual fires of devotion, in the very midst of the family life, with its morning and evening sacrifice, its incense of prayer and praise ever ascending a sweet savor to God. To remember such a childhood will some day bring a joy that can almost make old hearts young again.

And now, as the conclusion of our argument on this subject, and as expressive of the highest and holiest style of life this side the mansions of the blest, we may say that, if making our homes happy we do also make them sacred, we will have achieved for our households the utmost that is possible to us in this world, as well as all that we should desire to

accomplish—we will make them types of the heavenly homes that await the good in the world of light and perfect blessedness.

And this feeling, that heaven is home, has its roots deep in our hearts. Our Redeemer sanctions the sentiment, and makes a memorable appeal to our instinctive faith in its truthfulness: "Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also."

Thrice happy is that man whose memory of a Christian home quickens his desire for a better, in "Our Father's House" in heaven! In such a case we might say, with a good old German saint when about to go hence, "Blessed are the home-sick, for they shall get home!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE FAMILY ALTAR.

ON this subject we prefer to take from one of Robert Hall's eloquent sermons his admirable and useful remarks upon "Family Worship." These observations are commended to the careful and prayerful consideration of our readers.

"Family prayer is a natural and necessary acknowledgment of the dependence of families upon God, and the immeasurable obligations they are under to his goodness. On what, let me ask, does the obligation of social worship rest? Is it not in the social nature by which man is distinguished? It is because we are destined to live in society, and are bound together by mutual wants and sympathies, that it becomes a duty to worship the Creator in a social manner. Man, being essentially a social creature, his religion takes the form of his nature and becomes social. Supposing the justice of these observations to be admitted, they conclude with the greatest force in favor of the obligation of family worship. Does the duty of social worship result from man's being placed in society? Here is the closest and most intimate society. Is it right that mercies received in common should be publicly

acknowledged; that the interpositions of Divine goodness we in common want, should be implored in company with each other? Here is a perfect identity of wants and necessities; a closer conjunction of interests than can possibly subsist in any other situation. In an affectionate and well-ordered family, that quick sympathy is felt which pervades the members of the body: if one member suffers, all suffer with it; or if one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.

“No earthly blessing can befall the head of a family in which the members do not share the benefit; no calamity can befall him without spreading sadness and distress through the household. Whatever is suffered, or whatever is enjoyed, extends its influence through the whole circle. Whoever, consequently, reflects on the true foundation of social worship, must perceive that the arguments which evince its propriety apply to the worship of families with greater cogency, in proportion as the ties of domestic union are more close and intimate than all others. It is hardly possible to conceive of two individuals who are actuated by a principle of true religion, passing years together under the same roof without uniting in their addresses to a throne of grace. We feel a persuasion that two such individuals, though nowise related to each other, will be led to signalize their union by acts of social piety, and that as they must often hold ‘sweet counsel

together,' so they will frequently be disposed to pour out their supplications to God.

"How much more may this be expected to take place between those who are united in the close relation of husbands and wives, parents and children! It most assuredly will, unless that ingredient be wanting which, in the former instance, was supposed a principle of real piety. Thus we perceive that family religion is the natural result of the social nature of man, when sanctified by divine grace; that it is, in truth, a most important branch of social religion. Viewed in that light, it is clearly comprehended within the extent of the injunction, of 'praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.'

"The duty we are commending is enforced by its tendency, under the blessing of God, to form the minds of children and servants to the love and practice of religion. On those persons—if there be any such—who look upon religion as a delusive fancy, instead of the most important concern in the world, we despair of making any impression; but with those who believe it to be the one thing needful, the consideration now mentioned will have considerable weight. Nothing is more certain than that whatever we wish others to practice, we must exemplify in our conduct as well as enjoin. Would we wish to impress on young persons a sound regard for

veracity? We must maintain a strict regard to it in our intercourse with mankind. Are we desirous to train up our families in the observance of the rules of justice? We must take pains to signalize our attachment to it by exemplary uprightness in our behavior. In every department of moral and religious conduct we must not only point out the path, but lead the way. The application of this remark to the subject in hand is extremely obvious. Your wish, we take it for granted, is to train up your children in the fear of the Lord, and, as a necessary branch of this, in the practice of prayer. Is it likely you will succeed in that wish while you neglect to afford them an example of what you wish them to practice? What, under the blessing of Divine grace, is so calculated to impress them with the importance of prayer, as the being called at stated intervals to take part in your devout supplications to God? While they witness your constancy, assiduity, and fervor in this exercise, they cannot fail of acknowledging its importance, without avowing a contempt of parental example.

“A household in which family prayer is devoutly attended to, conjoined with the reading of the Scriptures, is a school of religious instruction. The whole contents of the sacred volume are in due time laid before them. They are continually reminded of their relation to God and their Redeemer, of their sins and their wants, and of the method they must

take to secure pardon for the one and relief for the other. Every day they are receiving 'line upon line, and precept upon precept.' A fresh accession is continually making to their stock of knowledge: new truths are gradually opened to their view, and the impression of old truths revived. A judicious parent will naturally notice the most striking incidents in his family in his devotional addresses, such as the sickness, or death, or removal for a longer or a shorter time, of the members of which it is composed. His address will be varied according to circumstances.* Has a pleasing event spread joy and cheerfulness through the household? it will be noticed with becoming expression of fervent gratitude. Has some calamity overwhelmed the domestic circle? it will give occasion for an acknowledgment of the divine equity. The justice of God's proceedings will be indicated and grace implored through the blood of the Redeemer to sustain and sanctify the stroke.

"When the most powerful feelings and the most interesting circumstances are thus connected with religion, it is not unreasonable to hope that through Divine grace, some lasting and useful impressions will be made. Is not some part of the good seed thus sown, and thus nurtured, likely to take root and

*And we may add to Mr. Hall's judicious suggestions, that the Bible lesson may lend the charm of pleasing and useful variety to the form and language of the prayer that succeeds it.

to become fruitful? Deeply as we are convinced of the deplorable corruption of the human heart, and the necessity, consequent on this, of divine agency to accomplish a saving purpose, we must not forget that God is accustomed to work by means; and surely none can be conceived more likely to meet the end. What can be so likely to impress a child with the dread of sin, as to hear his parent constantly deprecating the wrath of God as justly due to it; or to induce him to seek an interest in the mediation and intercession of the Saviour, as to hear him imploring it for him, day by day, with an importunity proportioned to the magnitude of the subject?

“By a daily attendance on such exercises children and servants are taught most effectually to pray; suitable topics are suggested to their minds; suitable petitions are put into their mouths; while their growing acquaintance with the Scriptures furnishes the arguments by which they may ‘plead with God.’

“May I not appeal to you who have enjoyed the blessing of being trained up under religious parents, whether you do not often recall with solemn tenderness what you felt in domestic worship; how amiable your parent appeared at such seasons, doubly sacred, while you beheld in him, not only the father but the priest over his household, invested not only with parental authority, but with the beauty of holiness

“Where a principle of religion is not yet planted in the hearts of the young, family prayer, accompanied with the reading of the Scriptures, is with the divine blessing, the most likely means of introducing it. Where it already subsists, it is admirably adapted to cherish, strengthen, and advance it to maturity; in the latter case it is like the morning and the evening dew at the root of the tender blade. On the contrary, where there is no public acknowledgment of God in a family, nothing can be expected but that children and servants should grow up ignorant and careless of their highest concerns. You may pretend, indeed, that you are punctual in your private devotions; but without observing that this pretense, under such circumstance, will seldom bear a rigorous examination. What is that part of your conduct that falls under the notice of your domestics, that distinguishes you from those unhappy persons who live without God in the world? If the Scriptures are not read, if your family is never convened for worship, no trace or vestige of religion remains. A stranger who sojourns in such a family will be tempted to exclaim, with much more truth and propriety than Abraham on another occasion: ‘Surely the fear of God is not in this place’

“The practice of family worship may be expected to have a most beneficial influence on the character and conduct of the heads of families themselves. In common with other means of grace, it is reasonable

to expect it will have this influence. Of all the means of grace, prayer is the most beneficial. But prayer, under the circumstances we are now contemplating, is likely to be productive of advantages which deserve to be considered by themselves.

“He who stately invites others to be witnesses of his devotions invites a peculiar inspection of his behavior, and must be conscious to how much observation and contempt he lays himself open should he betray a flagrant inconsistency between his prayers and his conduct. That parent who morning and evening summons his family to acts of devotion, is not perhaps distinctly aware of the total amount of the influence this circumstance has upon his mind. It will act as a continual monitor, and will impose useful restraint upon his behavior. He recollects that he is about to assume an awful and venerable character in the eyes of his domestics—a character which must set the indulgence of a multitude of improprieties in a most glaring light. Is he in danger of being ensnared into indecent levity, or of contracting a habit of foolish jesting and talking? He recollects he is soon to appear as the mouth of his family in addressing the blessed God. Is he surrounded with temptations to an immoderate indulgence of his fleshly appetites in meats and drinks; should he yield to the temptation how would he bear in the eyes of his family to appear on his knees before God? Is he tempted to use harsh and pro-

voking language to his children? He recollects he is in a few hours to bear them in his arms before the Lord. He is to commend his companion in life to the divine mercy and protection; how, then, can he be 'bitter against her?' The case of his servants is to be shortly presented before God in social prayer; under such a recollection it will surely not be difficult for him to forbear threatening, reflecting that he himself has 'a Master in heaven.' Knowing that in the hearing of all his inmates he is about to bewail the corruptions of his nature, to implore pardon for his sins and strength to resist temptation, will he not feel a double obligation on this account to struggle against that corruption and anxiously to shun temptation? The punctual discharge of the duty we are contending for will strengthen his sense of the obligation of domestic duties, forcibly remind him of what he owes to every member of the domestic circle, and cement the ties of conjugal and parental affections.

"The most plausible plea which will be urged for the neglect of this duty, that I think of, is want of ability. To this it would not be easy to furnish a reply, did it absolutely require a degree of ability above the most ordinary measure. They who urge this plea may be conscious of their incapacity to become the mouth of others in extemporary prayer, but this is by no means necessary. Excellent forms, expressive of the wants and desires of all Christian

families, may be obtained, which, supposing the inability alleged to be real, ought by all means to be employed. We, as Dissenters, for the most part, use and prefer free prayer. But God forbid we should ever imagine this the only mode of prayer which is acceptable to God. We cannot doubt that multitudes of devout persons have used forms of devotion with great and eminent advantage. To present our desires before God, in reliance on the atonement of the Mediator, is the real end of prayer, and is equally acceptable whether it be offered with or without a preconceived form of words. The plea of mental inability will not stand the test of an examination, unless it includes an incapacity to read; a case comparatively rare, and which we hope is becoming continually rarer, and applies to few instances of the neglect we are complaining of.

“It is more than probable that those who complain of this inability have never made the trial, and consequently never can form any accurate judgment of their qualifications. Were you to make the attempt, beginning with the use of a form if absolutely necessary, and making variations and additions as your feelings may suggest, you would find the accomplishment of that gracious promise, ‘They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength.’

“If your omission of family prayer is accompa-

nied with a similar neglect of private devotion, your situation is, indeed, deplorable ; you are living ‘without God in the world.’ But supposing you to make conscience of private prayer, why not adopt the same method in domestic worship, with the addition of such petitions as the circumstances of its greater publicity require ? Beware lest a secret disaffection to God, a secret enmity to his person and his ways, lies at the foundation of this apology. It wears a show of humility, but it is but a mere shadow of it, without the substance.

“Another class of persons are ready to admit the propriety and utility of this practice, but allege that such is the variety and multitude of their worldly avocations, that they cannot spare the time requisite for this exercise. Let such be urged to remember that the time necessary for the purpose we are recommending is very small—five minutes will suffice for reading an ordinary chapter ; not many more for the utterance of a fervent prayer ; so that the exercise, morning and evening, need occupy little, if any thing, more than half an hour. And is this a space too much to be allotted, in the most busy life, for an exercise so sacred in its obligation, and so replete with advantage, as this has been shown to be ? Where is the man so incessantly occupied as not to allow himself more leisure than this, frequently, if not habitually that does not allot more time to objects of confessedly inferior magnitude ?

“In addition to what has been advanced, it would not be difficult to prove that no loss of time will usually result; for what may seem a loss will be more than compensated by that spirit of order and regularity which the stated observance of this duty tends to produce. It will serve as an edge and border to preserve the web of life from unraveling; it will tend to keep every thing in its proper place and time; and this practice will naturally introduce a similar regularity in other employments. Consider for a moment on what principle does the plea of want of time depend. Plainly, on this: that religion is not the grand concern; that there is something more important than the service of God; that the pleasing and glorifying of our Maker is not the great end of human existence; a fatal delusion, a soul-destroying mistake, which militates against the whole spirit of the Gospel, and presumptuously impeaches the wisdom of that Saviour who exclaimed, ‘Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.’

“Another class will, perhaps, reply, ‘We are convinced of the urgent obligation of the duty which has been recommended; but we have so long neglected it that we know not how to begin—are ashamed at the prospect of the surprise, the curiosity, it will occasion.’

“But there is much impiety in this shame, and if

it be permitted to deter you from complying with the dictates of conscience and the command of God, it will unquestionably class you with the fearful and unbelieving, who shall have their portion in the second death. To be ashamed of the service of Christ is to be ashamed of Christ and his cross; and you have heard the divine denunciation of judgment on such characters: 'Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.' You are afraid of presenting yourself under a singular aspect to your domestics and acquaintance: have you not reflected on the awful and trying situation in which you will be placed by the infliction of the sentence, justly merited, 'Of him will I be ashamed?'"

We will only add to what the eloquent and evangelical preacher has said a short story which comes to the writer in a reliable shape, and well illustrates the closing thoughts of Mr. Hall's admirable discourse.

"A well-to-do and intelligent farmer, who had eight grown-up children, was powerfully convicted of sin, but would not yield to be saved. Being asked as to the nature of his difficulties, he answered: "If I become a Christian and make a profession of religion I must have *family worship*. But I cannot take my Bible, read a chapter, and

then kneel down and pray in the presence of my family. Had I commenced when my children were young, as I *ought* to have done, it would have been comparatively easy; but now most of them are grown up around me, and I cannot do it, *I cannot do it.*"

"And he did not."

CHAPTER XVI.

ELI AND HIS SONS.

ELI was high-priest and judge in Israel when the ark was in Shiloh. How he came to be priest, and how the priestly office was transferred from the house of Eleazer to the house of Ithamar, who was Aaron's youngest son, we do not know.* The beginning of Eli's career is hid in the gloom of the dark ages of Jewish history. Samson, who was little more than a lawless leader of lawless men, could do but little for Israel that would survive his own turbulent life. He was no true ruler of the people, teaching them right principles, and illustrating them in his own life. He made no contribution to the progress of the nation. He left to history nothing but the story of his amazing strength and his terrible revenges. When the blind giant pulled down upon himself the temple of Dagon in Gaza and found common death with the lords of the Philistines, Israel was left to the turbulence and revenges of discordant factions, and to the rage of relentless enemies. There followed a long and gloomy period of anarchy, when "there was no king

* Compare 1 Sam. i, 3, 9; Lev, x, 1, 2, 12; 1 Kings ii, 27; 1 Chron. xxiv, 3; 2 Sam. viii, 17. Also 1 Sam. xiv, 3.

in Israel, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes." This is the last word in the history of the Judges of Israel, and it tells us plainly enough what the historian had not the heart to record. The last five chapters of the book of Judges are crowded with pictures of confusion, anarchy, irregular worship, idolatry, internecine struggles, and horrid war—pictures drawn in fire and blood.

Amid some of the disorders of this dark period Eli became high-priest and judge of Israel. He appears upon the scene abruptly—sitting upon "a seat by a post in the temple of the Lord," close by the spot where Hannah, the sorrowful, because childless, wife of Elkanah, was praying that God would give her a son. When he died at the age of ninety-eight, he had been priest and ruler for forty years. But we cannot tell how long he had been in office the day he administered the unmerited rebuke to the pious Hannah.

The parent who can read the story of Eli and his sons without anxious interest, increased by many mingled hopes and fears concerning his own children, is strangely insensible. For it is a story replete with dramatic power and tragic interest. Nor does the simple recital of the ancient chronicler who compiled the annals of Samuel need the garniture of many words.

As to Eli himself, he does not appear to have been a man of great gifts or great deeds. His life

is not instructive by its exalted virtues and deep devotion so much as by its neglects, its misfortunes, and its punishment. That his disposition was amiable and affectionate is evident. Very kind were his words to Hannah when once he understood why she lingered and prayed in the house of God.

The brightest trait in Eli's character is his submission to the will of God when it bore hardest upon him and his house.

In the morning after young Samuel's vision Eli called him and said, "What is the thing that the Lord hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me. . . . And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him." It was no message of hope, but the revelation of the doom that was hovering over the high-priest's house. "And the Lord said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering forever."

In this last warning ever given to Eli there is a reference to admonitions and threatenings already

delivered. About twenty years, as is supposed, before the midnight revelation to young Samuel, "a man of God"—an unknown and unnamed prophet—suddenly appears before Eli, delivers a fearful message, and then steps back into the obscurity from which he came and we see him no more.

What had this unnamed prophet said to the venerable priest, while Hophni and Phinehas were yet in their youth, while there was yet hope for their reformation and salvation?

"And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house? And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? and did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel? Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honorest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people? Wherefore the Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me forever: but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed. Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm,

and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house. And thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in thine house forever. And the man of thine whom I shall not cut off from mine altar, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart: and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age. And this shall be a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die both of them. And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed forever. And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left in thine house shall come and crouch to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priests' offices, that I may eat a piece of bread."

All this was terrible. God's wrath was to be poured in overwhelming and desolating storms upon Eli and his house. But this was not the worst; so far, at least, as this world was concerned, there was to be no mercy. "I have sworn unto Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice and offering forever."

What answer can Eli make to Samuel's message, announcing the impending judgments of God, and

declaring anew what the "man of God," the unnamed prophet, had said twenty years ago? Truly it was no ordinary humility and resignation to the Divine will that could promptly reply to all this, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." We have a further and striking proof of his personal piety in his deep concern for the ark of God, and his heart-breaking sorrow at its capture, on the day of Israel's overwhelming defeat by the Philistine armies.

But Eli was a very inefficient ruler, a very unwise, unfaithful, and unhappy father; "a wavering, feeble, powerless man, with excellent intentions, but an utter want of will." As chief judge and high-priest of Israel during forty years, he held the reins of authority with a feeble and irresolute hand. Frederick Robertson says of him: "He could not rule his own household; he could not rule the Church of God—a shy, solitary, amiable ecclesiastic and recluse was Eli. And such are the really fatal men in the work of life. . . . Eli's feelings were always good; his acts were always wrong. In sentiment he might be always trusted; in action he was forever false, because he was a weak, vacillating man. All history overrates such men. Men, like Eli, ruin families by instability, produce revolutions, die well when only passive courage is wanted, and are reckoned martyrs. They live like children and die like heroes. Deeply true to nature and instructive is

this history of Eli. It is quite natural that such men should suffer well. For if only their minds are made up for them by inevitable circumstances, they can submit. When people come to Eli and say, 'You should reprove your sons,' he can do it after a fashion; when it is said to him, 'You must die,' he can make up his mind to die; but this is not *taking* up the cross."

It is evident from various circumstances that during his long and feeble rule many abuses that should have been crushed the day they were born had grown up all around him. When Hannah went into the temple of the Lord at Shiloh, "and was in bitterness of soul," as she prayed to God for a son, Eli who was sitting close by where she knelt mistook her for a lewd and drunken woman. "And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli marked her mouth. Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee." All this shows that religion was at a low ebb indeed, and the regulations concerning the admission of improper characters into the sacred inclosure much neglected. The manner in which this circumstance is introduced into the narrative shows that drunken women were frequently seen close about the altars of God. When matters had reached

such a pass that the sight of one supposed to be a drunken woman in the sanctuary excited no surprise, and only drew from the high-priest a commonplace reproof, we may well believe that there had been strange and criminal carelessness in the administration of affairs.

Under Eli's slack and feeble rule many grave abuses had developed in the dealings of the subordinate priests with the people. Certain parts of the offerings were allotted by law for the support of the priests and their families. In addition to this it had become customary for the servants of the priests to come, while the flesh was being boiled for the use of the offerer and his friends, and, with his three-pronged flesh-hook * in his hand, "he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot." What his "three-pronged flesh-hook" brought up the priest appropriated to his own use. "So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither." The people, perhaps, out of a habit of veneration for a priesthood that was indeed no longer entitled to respect, submitted to this additional tax upon their offerings, by which the appetite of the priests was gratified with greater variety, and their avarice with larger perquisites. But these rapacious sons of Be-

* The three-pronged fork which fishes up the seething flesh is the earliest type of grasping at pluralities and church preferments by base means. For students of ecclesiastical history, Hophni and Phinehas are characters of great and "instructive wickedness." They are the true exemplars of the grasping and worldly clergy of all ages.—*Stanley*.

ial, Eli's sons, were not satisfied with this. The flesh-hook plunged into the pot at random did not always bring up the choicest pieces. They claimed the very best of the offerings, and if any devout, honest-minded Israelite objected to a proceeding so unjust, and so unworthy the sacred office of the priests, the very servants of these apostates had the effrontery to take by force whatever pieces of the flesh they chose. Eli was a careless judge and a negligent high-priest to allow such outrages to pass unrebuked, or even to allow them to exist for a single day. Had Eli been faithful to his sacred duties, had he "honored God" aright, he would, without ceremony or delay, have ejected from an office they so shamefully abused these "sons of Belial," Hophni and Phinehas—"lording it over God's heritage," and "profaning his altar."

As always, in such a case, things went from bad to worse. The avarice and rapaciousness of Eli's sons became a stench in the nostrils of all the people. Their wickedness culminated at last in the foulest and most unblushing debauchery. Was ever blacker record made than this? "Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle." Truly the glory was departing from Israel. How mournful is the inspired comment, "Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord; for

men abhorred the offerings of the Lord." These were evil times indeed; truly these men were "wolves in sheep's clothing"—like the devil, to whom they belonged, "going about" seeking whom they might destroy.

It was truly "the hour and the power of darkness," when those who should have won the people to God's worship, by their rapacity and licentiousness drove them in mortal disgust from the house of God, and barred them from the use of his altars.

Now read and learn ye parents who let your children live as they list. What sort of a speech is that which a timid, doting, fond, and foolish old father made to his reprobate sons! What sort of rebuke is that which God's anointed high-priest and appointed judge administered to apostate priests, who had made themselves so vile that God's humble worshipers were made to "abhor the offerings" of his altar! Hear him, the fond father, "honoring" his unworthy sons above the honor he showed to the cause of God, "And he said unto them, Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil doings by all the people. Nay, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear: ye make the Lord's people to transgress." Such words might have been appropriate as the rebuke of some minor offense; as the reproof of men smarting with a tender conscience, and penitent on account of acknowledged and lamented faults. But for such brazen-faced apostates and

seducers of the people, no words were sufficient. To have ejected them at once and forever from every priestly office was the very least that Eli could have done, if his fear of God had surpassed his foolish fondness for his wicked sons.

But the principal charge brought against him is one that makes his life and fate an instructive study and an impressive warning to us all. Why are such dire punishments to be visited upon Eli's house? Why is the "man of God," the unnamed prophet, who delivered the first warning while yet, perhaps, there was space for repentance, commissioned to tell the high-priest of a coming day when there should "not be an old man in his house?"—when he should "see an enemy in his habitation?"—when such of his children as should not be cut off should live but "to consume his eyes, and to grieve his heart?"—when "all the increase of his house should die in the flower of their age?"—when any soul of his descendants who might escape should come to those who occupied the places that might have been theirs, and "crouch to them for a piece of silver, and a morsel of bread?" These were, indeed, terrible maledictions. How are they to be explained? Of what heinous parental sin are they the just and appropriate punishment? God gives the answer—simple, conclusive—"For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity that he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile

and he restrained them not." These words were spoken to Samuel, who announced as impending a doom of which long time before the "man of God" had given the first warning.

But in vain. Hophni and Phinehas went on their way, and the doting father, through all these years of probation lengthened out, "restrained them not." Eli knew what became a father and a high-priest, and his fault would have been inexcusable had there been no special warning. But after the warning his sin—as to its consequences in this world at least—was unpardonable.

It is not simply a question of the effect of his weak indulgence upon his sons themselves, but upon the people and the cause of God. In Eli's fault was the origin of most of the troubles of the times. His sons "caused the Lord's people to transgress." They made them to "abhor the offerings of God." What Hophni and Phinehas could do to debauch society and corrupt the Church they did. By the potent force of their iniquitous example, they taught the people avarice, rapacity, profanity, licentiousness. They turned loose such a tide of sin as came near sweeping away both the religion and the liberties of the nation.

God makes Eli responsible for this fearful state of things, because he did not punish "the iniquity" that he knew; because he did not arrest in his sons the growth of sins that well-nigh destroyed the

people; "because his sons made themselves vile and he restrained them not."

Had Eli been a true father to his sons they had never outgrown his authority; they had never reached a depth of abandonment in sin that shut them off from sacrifice and intercession. If there is any first duty we owe our children, it is that which Eli did not perform—it is the duty of *restraining* them. What a mercy it is to restrain our children from the commission of sin! How great is our sin when we do it not!

It is not the fondest parent who always loves his child the best, nor the most doting who will gain the child's most devoted and lasting love. On the other hand the severest parents are not those who govern most wisely and successfully. O, that rare man, that rare woman, who knows how to love and to rule—how to temper kindness with firmness! If the hand of affection hold firmly and wisely the rod of authority, there is a sure pledge of the Divine blessing upon the training such government implies, and upon the obedience that it secures.

We may close this chapter most appropriately with the wise words of Dr. Adam Clarke:—

"Many fine families have been spoiled, and many ruined, by the separate exercise of these two principles. Parental affection, when alone, infallibly degenerates into foolish fondness; and parental authority frequently degenerates into brutal tyranny

when standing by itself. The first sort of parents will be loved without being respected ; the second will be dreaded without either respect or esteem. A father may be as fond of his offspring as Eli, and his children be sons of Belial ; he may be as authoritative as the Grand Turk, and his children despise and plot rebellion against him. But let parental authority be tempered with fatherly affection, and let the rein of discipline be steadily held by this powerful but affectionate hand, and there shall the pleasure of God prosper ; there will he give his blessing, even life for evermore."

CHAPTER XVII.

ICHABOD.

LET us follow to its catastrophe this doleful tragedy. Heaven reserves the right of vindicating its insulted majesty at the great judgment-day. The stores of its delayed vengeance will not be found wanting in that day of final inquisition and award. But lest men should altogether forget that there is really a Divine government, or grow skeptical as to God's purpose to enforce its claims, ever and anon, even in this world, the omnipotent Ruler smites his obdurate enemies with the rod of his power. Here and there, along the great highway of the world's history, God has built monuments over the dead nations for the warning of the living. And there are more of them than careless readers suppose. They are found in almost every land, silent but mighty preachers of repentance. This—that penalty is the normal and inevitable sequence of sin—is the lesson they teach, the gospel of repentance they preach: "The wages of sin is death." This is God's announcement to all the nations that dwell upon the earth. Sin brings death, always, and every-where; and nothing else does, or can, bring death to man. But sin is the beginning of

death—rather it is death begun. It is also “the sting of death”—to individuals, to families, to nations. It cannot be otherwise. The Bible is full of this doctrine; sound reason agrees to it; experience and observation confirm and illustrate it. It is the great lesson of human history. Not Jewish history only, but all other history that we read aright, proclaims and illustrates this law: “The wages of sin is death.”

This is what the flood that swept the earth of its life in the days of Noah teaches us. This is the meaning of the fiery ruin that descended on Sodom and Gomorrah. This voice comes to us from Jerusalem in ruins. And the Jews—a scattered nation, peeled and oppressed—in exile among all people, preach to all generations the sin, and folly, and ruin of rebellion against God. We hear this warning, in a muffled voice from the graves of Herculaneum and Pompeii. The desolate palaces of Nineveh and Babylon echo the same solemn warning: “The wages of sin is death.”

Is there any truth so plain, so important as this, and yet so hard to understand, so easy to forget?

The apostasy of the priests, led on by Hophni and Phinehas, and the consequent wickedness of the people, culminated at last in that fearful scourge of God—cruel, relentless war. Only the wicked or the ignorant can wish for war. Those whose hearts are steeled to human woe may welcome war as the

means of their aggrandizement; and those who do not know what war is—who have never seen battle-fields, or hospitals, or besieged and destroyed cities—who have never helped to bury noble friends in shallow ditches right where they died—who never followed the wake of a desolating army—who have never known the poverty and the hunger, the widowhood and orphanage, the madness and the sin of war, these may talk glibly of military glory, but the good man, who is wise, hates war and prays evermore for peace.

The Philistines were in Canaan before the coming of Abraham. Originally coming from a tribe of the Egyptians they settled themselves in the south of Palestine, probably stretching themselves northward along the Mediterranean coast. In the time of Joshua their country was divided into five lordships or principalities: Gaza—in the extreme south—Askelon, Ashdod, Gath, and Ekron, on the north. The conquests of Joshua in Philistia were ill maintained, for we find these fierce men from the south, through the whole four hundred years of the judges, warring upon Israel with a bitterness that was never appeased. Oftentimes they were the cruel oppressors of Israel, till such time as “Israel cried unto the Lord,” and some deliverer was sent in answer to the prayer of a penitent nation. There were always quarrels between Israel and the Philistines. Nor were they ever subdued till David established

his kingdom, and overthrew the enemies of his people.

Soon after the last message and warning to Eli—delivered through young Samuel—war broke out between the children of Israel and the Philistines. “Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside Eben-ezer: and the Philistines pitched in Aphek. And the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel: and when they joined battle, Israel was smitten before the Philistines: and they slew of the army in the field about four thousand men.”

The result of this first battle seems to have been a surprise to the children of Israel. But discomfited though they were, they strengthened themselves for another trial of arms.

The elders took counsel together. They remembered, perhaps, how that Moses, when Israel joined battle with Midian, sent, along with the people, “Phinehas, the son of Eleazer the priest, to the war, with the holy instruments.” Perhaps, too, they recalled the procession of priests, bearing the ark in their midst, around the doomed city of Jericho. And the elders said, “Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us to-day before the Philistines?” Alas! they seemed not to know that their sins had brought defeat that day upon Israel. Instead of proclaiming a fast and bowing themselves to the earth in repentance and lamentation over their sins, they say, “Let

us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies."

Deluded men! They should have sought for the coming of the God of the covenant, and not for the ark of the covenant. The ark could do them no good who had forsaken their God. But how this delusion has perpetuated itself in the world! When the Church loses the "life and power of godliness," she clings with superstitious reverence and fondness to the dead and putrefying forms of the life that she has lost. Better in such a case to "bury their dead out of their sight."

"How have the mighty fallen!" "How has the fine gold become dim!" Are these the children of the men who followed Joshua's banner and chased their enemies when the "sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day?" Those who have forgotten God now seek "the ark," saying, "that when it cometh among us, it may save us from the hands of our enemies." And what was this "ark of the covenant" without the presence and blessing of Him who answered from between the cherubim when the people forsook their sins and sought him aright? The "ark" was now to them no more than "a charm." When the God of the covenant had forsaken them, the ark of the covenant had no power to deliver. Woe to the Church that bears at the head of its columns,

“an ark,” no longer consecrated by the presence of God! Woe to the Church that clings to dead forms, not knowing that the life has gone out of them!

“So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from thence the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubim: and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.” An ill omen this, when these bad men, who had “caused the Lord’s people to transgress,” and who had made them to “abhor the offerings of God,” came bearing the “ark of the covenant” they had broken and despised. “And when the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again.” If Israel had known her duty aright, wails and lamentations would have rent the heavens, and the earth would have been wet with penitential tears. Vain was the shout that made “the earth ring again.” The deserted ark had no power to rally their broken legions. But the Philistines were afraid when they heard the unwonted cheers, and recalling, perhaps, the prowess of Joshua, of Gideon, and of Samson, the chiefs rallied their soldiers and in the name of all their gods, exhorted them to “quit themselves like men.”

And they joined battle—terrible, bloody battle. It was one of those days when the sorrowful and sobbing earth opened to hide the blood of her chil-

dren. "And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him." "And the Philistines fought, and Israel was smitten, and they fled every man into his tent: and there was a very great slaughter; for there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen."

There was not the thunder of artillery and the rattle of musketry to hush the groans of the dying, nor sulphurous smoke to hide the bloody work from the face of the sun; for they fought with spears and swords. The two armies emptied their quivers and then rushed together in the strife and agony of hand to hand conflict. There was all the frenzy and fierce struggling of personal combat. Ere the sun went down, the broken lines of the Hebrew army were slowly and sullenly falling back before their victorious enemies.

At last retreat became rout, with its confusion and madness, helplessness and despair. There was sore weeping that night among the mothers, and wives, and maidens of Israel—the flower of their army lay dead in the fields of Aphek, in the tribe of Issachar.

What a sad story is this! It is woe piled on woe. It is war, defeat, disaster, rout, and thirty-four thousand brave men dead. But there is another shame and another sorrow awaiting the discomfited army: "And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were

slain." As to the young men it seems—since they would not reform—better that it were so. But "the ark" in which they trusted, that, too, is gone.

By and by the evil tidings reach Shiloh—a name prophetic of the Prince of Peace. "And there ran a man of Benjamin out of the army, and came to Shiloh the same day [it was nearly forty miles] with his clothes rent, and earth upon his head."

Where was poor old Eli that day of grief and wrath? "And when he came, lo, Eli sat upon a seat by the way-side watching: for his heart trembled for the ark of God."

The panting runner ran by the poor old man and rushed into the city. "And when the man came into the city, and told it, all the city cried out. And when Eli heard the noise of the crying, he said, What meaneth the noise of this tumult? And the man came in hastily and told Eli. Now Eli was ninety and eight years old; and his eyes were dim, that he could not see. And the man said unto Eli, I am he that came out of the army, and I fled to-day out of the army. And he said, What is there done, my son? And the messenger answered and said, Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God is taken. And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the seat backward by the side

of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died: for he was an old man, and heavy."

Let us who have children stand by the gate of Shiloh and consider. Let us behold old Eli, lying dead by the side of the gate. God *has* "judged his house," "because his sons made themselves vile and he restrained them not." Unwise, indulgent, unfaithful, unhappy Eli, this is the sad end of your doting fondness, your unfaithfulness as a father and a priest, your indecision and timidity as a judge. God held Eli responsible for the sins of his children. He will so hold us. O! fond mother, your heart refuses the lesson of this sad tragedy, and you say to yourself, "But my sweet prattler can never be bad like the sons of Eli." Alas! you know not the nature and the power of sin. There was a time when these dark men—Hophni and Phinehas—were as innocent of crime as the fair babe that smiles on your breast and looks love into your eyes. They, too, once lifted their tiny hands in the evening prayer, their voices joined in the morning song, and long before Eli's eyes grew dim with age and weeping, they were the pride of his heart and the hope of his life. The sweetest child that ever looked up from a fond mother's heart, if left to itself, if unrestrained by parental authority—unrenewed and unblessed by the grace of God—may become as reprobate as Hophni and Phinehas. May the curse that fell on Eli's house be far from each one of us forever!

But Eli and his sons fell not alone. The pious wife of the apostate and dead Phinehas was heart-broken by these sore calamities. "And his daughter-in-law, Phinehas's wife, was with child, near to be delivered: and when she heard the tidings that the ark of God was taken, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she bowed herself and travailed; for her pains came upon her. And about the time of her death, the women that stood by her said unto her, Fear not, for thou hast borne a son. But she answered not, neither did she regard it. And she named the child *Ichabod*, saying, The glory is departed from Israel . . . for the ark of God is taken."

"And will the living lay it to heart?"

PART II.

THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

CHAPTER I.

THE MAGNITUDE OF THE MOVEMENT.

NO thoughtful man who is concerned about the welfare of the Church, or of the State, can be indifferent to the Sunday-school movement of our times. This age is fruitful in notable developments. Its plans are projected on a large scale. Nothing is, perhaps, more unjust or foolish than the habit of a certain class of people of decrying the times. It is quite useless to reason with these people—they have “made up their minds.” They are sure that the “times are out of joint,” that the “former days *were* better than these days”—Solomon to the contrary—that we are all—themselves excepted—“degenerate sons of noble sires,” that every thing is going to the bad. Evidences of substantial progress make about as much impression upon them as sunlight upon a stone-blind eye.

One thing may be said, without injustice or want of charity, concerning this class of persons—they do nothing to make the times better.

There is not space in our little book to speak in detail of the evidences of the substantial progress of our times. We belong to that hopeful class who believe that there is more religion in the world now than at any previous period. Undoubtedly there are more Churches and more professors of religion. There are more Bibles printed, circulated, and, as we firmly believe, read, believed, loved, and obeyed than at any other time in the history of the world. Only think! The precious word of God is now printed and circulated in nearly *three hundred* of the babbling tongues of our race. And this gift of life is being carried to all nations. The "true Light" is shining in many of the dark places of the earth:—

"Higher yet that Star ascends."

There were never so many missionary organizations as now; never so many missionaries in the foreign field; never so much money raised, year after year, for the advancement of Christ's kingdom; never so many heathen converted to God. There were never so few professors of Christianity opposed to missions, or indifferent to them. There were never so many good books in circulation; never so many periodical publications doing battle for the truth. The press was never so subsidized to the uses of the Christian religion as to-day. It is very true that the agencies of evil have been multiplied and intensified. The devil is a famous copyist, and

it has always been his practice to counterfeit every genuine coin in circulation. This intensifies the antagonism between the empires of light and darkness; but the empire of light is wider and stronger. "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet."

One reason that some persons imagine the world to be getting worse is found in the fact that our modern appliances for collecting intelligence gathers up and publishes every thing—good and bad—that is going on in the world.

The telegraph and the daily paper tell us every thing. The world's wickedness, as well as its goodness, is laid bare to public inspection. But the fact that we see and hear more of the wickedness that is done, is, in itself, no proof that more is committed. But we must not, at this place, enter upon the consideration of these many-sided themes.

As already intimated, the Sunday-school movement is one of the most notable facts of our times. So far as the formative influences that enter into the determination of the character of the next generation are concerned, it will, perhaps, be agreed by all, that the Sunday-school *is one of the most notable* facts of our times. Those—if there still linger a few invincibly obstinate and ignorant doubters—who oppose the Sunday-school, must admit its importance from its very magnitude. No matter how much or how little of good may be in this move-

ment, its magnitude, if nothing else, makes it a matter of very great importance. If several hundred thousand grown people and several millions of children met together once a week without speaking a word—if they only looked at each other in utter silence—we should have a subject of interest and importance.

Let us consider briefly some of the leading facts and figures connected with this movement.

In the first place, it is *every-where* in our country. Outside of some of the most recently settled territories and some of the newest railroad stations there is hardly a county, or village, or hamlet in the United States without a Sunday-school. With few exceptions, we may say, wherever there is a Church there is a Sunday-school.

The Secretary of the International Sunday-school Association made an elaborate and carefully prepared report at the meeting in Baltimore, in May, 1875. We know something of the care with which the statistics of his report were gathered. Most of them were from official sources. We do not question that they are in the main as reliable as any statistical tables prepared for public consideration. They are as reliable as the United States census we do not doubt.

Now, we have long ago learned that all statistics, covering a wide field of observation, are to be received as only approximations to the truth. We

do not belong to those who place implicit faith in statistical columns and schedules: All philosophy is not, as some seem to think, wrapped up in these long columns of bewildering figures. But the Sunday-school statistics referred to above we believe to be substantially correct.

How many Sunday-schools, according to these tables, are there in the United States? We copy from the official report. The secretary says, 69,871. How many teachers and officers are engaged in the management of these 69,871 schools? The secretary says, 753,060. How many scholars are in these 69,871 schools and under the guidance and instruction—at least for one hour on the Sabbath—of these 753,060 officers and teachers? The secretary says, 5,790,683.

Counting Canada with the United States, there are 74,272 schools; 788,805 officers and teachers; 6,062,064 scholars. Most of these scholars are children between the ages of six and fifteen; nearly all of them are young people under twenty.

Counting officers, teachers, and scholars, there are engaged in Sunday-school work in the United States 6,543,743 persons; by adding Canada, 6,850,869. Reckoning the population of the United States as being about 40,000,000, we find more than one seventh of our entire population engaged in some way in the Sunday-school work. These naked figures indicate a movement of immense magnitude

and power, even if we do not take into account the character of the movement itself. Now what is ostensibly the design of this Sunday-school movement? To teach God's word to children and young people in order to bring them to Jesus Christ, their King and Redeemer, and to secure, by the blessing of God, their salvation. What does this vast army of Sunday-school "officers and teachers" *do*? They bring this multitude of children largely under their personal influence. How do they spend the hour allotted to the Sunday-school on the Sabbath day? In singing, in praying, in teaching the Bible, in delivering advice and exhortation on moral subjects. Millions of books are given out and millions of papers distributed every week.

What tremendous powers are here at work! These 753,060 teachers teaching God's word and will to 5,790,683 children! And these songs, prayers, lessons, exhortations, these children never will, never can forget. They will be, of necessity they must be, largely influenced by these agencies. These children are forming opinions upon the most important subjects that can invite their attention—their duty to God and to their fellow-men. Who can measure the height and depth and length and breadth of these influences? No man can overstate or exaggerate their magnitude, their power. And they are every-where.

If these influences are evils, there are no greater

evils. If they are good, there are few greater blessings.

Another important question is this: What is the character of these officers and teachers—in the United States alone 753,060 of them? No doubt many of them are far below what they ought to be. Many of them are ignorant and indolent. Many of them are lacking in both zeal and knowledge. But take them all together, the Sunday-school teachers are among the best people in the Church. There is among them more faith, love, zeal, and aggressive power than can be found among any 1,506,120 who are outside of this Sunday-school movement. We prefer to understate rather than to overstate these things. But we are safe in saying the real aggressive power of the Church is found among these 753,060 teachers and officers. Take them as a body, we venture to say they are the best people in the Church. And they are the most intelligent. They read more, study more—particularly in the Bible. And most of them are in earnest. The most zealous men and women of the Church are engaged in the Sunday-school work.

We say again, the magnitude of the Sunday-school movement entitles it to thoughtful consideration. Whether we like it or not, the Sunday-school is a *fact*—a very great fact among us.

No doubt there is now and then an outbreak of fanaticism. So full a river will sometime break out

of its banks, but fertility follows its very inundations. Some songs are sung that neither poetry nor piety will approve. Some things are taught that are not true. There is much very superficial work. There are many things about the Sunday-school movement that are not altogether satisfactory, but it is the most notable—perhaps also the most hopeful—fact of our times. It will have, perhaps, more to do in making the future of our civilization than anything else.

If we would estimate the magnitude of the Sunday-school movement from another stand-point, consider its relations to the press. Several of the largest publishing houses in the country are run almost exclusively in the interest of Sunday-schools. A distinct sort of literature—"Sunday-school literature"—has sprung up. Scores of papers and magazines are published in this country for the use of teachers and scholars. Their circulation is immense—running up into the millions monthly. Millions of dollars are invested in the business of producing papers and books to meet this ever-growing demand for new "Sunday-school literature." The demand is always ahead of the supply.

Some people speak of the Sunday-school as a small affair—fit to amuse and occupy the attention of pious young women and of extra zealous men. How mistaken, how ignorant they are! For whether we work with it, or against it; whether we like it,

or dislike it, the fact remains, the Sunday-school is an institution of incalculable power. More, it is a steadily growing power—the current widens and deepens every day. It will have very much to do with the controlling influences that will fashion and fix the future of both Church and State in our country.

Is the Sunday-school not entitled to the attention, respect, sympathy, and co-operation of all who love either the country or the Church—of all true patriots and of all true Christians?

CHAPTER II.

THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL AUXILIARY.

IN considering the true sphere and work of the Sunday-school, one thing is clear to begin with, it is not to substitute any other means of grace or divinely appointed instrumentality of usefulness. The sooner this is distinctly understood and definitely recognized on all hands the better, every way, for all the great interests involved. The Sunday-school, rightly employed, will bring many contributions to increase the efficiency of every other means of grace and agency of usefulness, but it takes nothing from any of them. It is no substitute for the day-school, although it may, in a degree, supplement its deficiencies and countervail some of its incidental evils. It is no substitute for the regular ministration of the word of God by men called of him to preach the Gospel, but it may largely increase the resources and opportunities of the gospel ministry for thorough and efficient work. It is no substitute for parental government and instruction in the word of God, but it may greatly aid Christian fathers and mothers in bringing up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

The true conception of the Sunday-school is this:

it is *auxiliary* to every other divinely appointed means of grace. It cannot substitute any other, for each is necessary. As it seems to us, it is of very great importance that those who labor in the Sunday-school should understand this fundamental truth—it is *auxiliary*. To attempt to make it other, or more than this, is to make it less. If it be not an auxiliary—a helper—it is worse than nothing; it is a very great evil. It is like a badly-adjusted wheel in a complicated system of machinery; it develops friction and leads to breakage and ruin, instead of increasing, or regulating, or distributing power.

False or crude opinions at this point are at the bottom of almost all the troubles incident to the management of Sunday-schools. Once let a superintendent, or teacher, get it into his head that the Sunday-school is a substitute for any other means of grace, and he makes two very hurtful mistakes at once. First, he places the Sunday-school where it does not belong, and requires of it what it never can do. Secondly, he discounts, or subverts, or destroys some other means of grace that is indispensable to the work of the Church. Even to discount, by false views of one good thing, any other good thing is itself a great misfortune.

Let us illustrate by supposing a case that can never occur. Suppose that all should agree that the existence and work of the Sunday-school makes the Gospel ministry—the regular preaching of the

word--no longer necessary; and suppose that the pulpit should give place altogether to the instructions of the Sunday-school class; and suppose that we have no more preaching, and substitute, once for all, the preacher by the teacher: who does not know that this would destroy the Church?

God calls men to preach and he appoints preaching, because preachers and preaching are necessary to the work he intended the Church to do. But it may be said, nobody thinks of so absurd a thing as doing away with the pulpit—with preachers and preaching. True enough, and yet there are many who do this very thing—perhaps without intending it or knowing it—to a degree. They imagine that the Sunday-school teacher is doing the work of the preacher, and that, on account of this work, the preacher's work is no longer as necessary as once it was. This is to discount, and thereby to hinder, the work of preaching. But this is as injurious as it is unwise and unscriptural.

Let us take another illustration. Suppose that the 753,060 Sunday-school teachers in the United States should take it into their heads that they are doing the work of parents—of fathers and mothers—for these 5,790,683 children in the United States that listen to their instructions once a week, and that, in some sense, they substitute parental work—instruction, influence, government, discipline; and suppose the parents of these 5,790,683 chil-

dren should agree with this view, and all at once lay down their responsibilities, cease their work, withdraw their influence: what then? Such a course would be madness; its result would be ruin. After that the deluge.

But nobody proposes this. True; and yet many Sunday-school teachers do not understand aright that, as to the parental functions, the Sunday-school is simply auxiliary. And many parents, it is to be greatly feared, have suffered some weakening of their sense of responsibility in the rearing of their children on account of the work proposed or accomplished by the Sunday-school. But this is a grievous, a most hurtful, mistake. It were better to have no Sunday-school than to put it in a false attitude to other instrumentalities for doing good.

We have made special mention, in this connection, of the work of the gospel ministry and of the Christian family, because these are the two great driving-wheels through which God moves the whole machinery of useful agencies. These are the two divinely-ordained, and, therefore, indispensable instrumentalities. When the Sunday-school, or any other agency or influence, interferes with the normal functions of the ministry or the family, it is out of place and injurious. Whenever the Sunday-school works harmoniously with the ministry and the family it is in its place, and an unspeakable blessing.

Suppose the water-power that moves the compli-

cated machinery of a great factory is supplied by two streams that unite before they descend upon the great wheel, through which every smaller wheel is moved. Suppose now a third and smaller stream should be brought into the united current of the other two, in order to increase the power. What now would be the true relation of the new stream? An auxiliary, a helping relation. It is this, or worse than nothing.

Suppose it could move on to make the plunge upon the great wheel independently of the other two—that one of them should be stopped, or have its volume lessened by the presence of the third stream. How inevitable the result! Disaster.

The third stream is needed, but only that it may swell the volume and increase the power of the other two. The more completely it is merged in them the better. We have said much, in another place in our book, about the relation of the Christian family to the preservation and extension of religion in the earth. Much might be said upon the relations of the Christian ministry to the same work. Now the true work of the Sunday-school is that of helper to these two. The more intimately it is related to the Christian family and the Christian ministry the better for all interests involved. There is no Church without the Christian home and the Christian ministry. These two are great and Divine institutes for the salvation of the world. Welcome

the Sunday-school when it is a true helper to the Christian home and to the Christian ministry! Away with it when it hinders them, or discounts, or seeks to substitute them!

It is easy to apply a test. Does the Sunday-school make the preacher less zealous or useful? Then there is something wrong, and the Church of God suffers damage, although the preacher alone may be to blame. Does it make the father, the mother, less careful, less conscientious, less anxious to perform their sacred parental duties for the salvation of their children? In this case also there is something wrong, and the Church is damaged, although the parents only may be to blame. What effect is produced upon the mind of the scholar? Does the Sunday-school diminish his respect and veneration for the divinely-called preacher of the Gospel? Does it make, in any way, the preaching of the word less profitable to him? Then there is something wrong, and the managers of the Sunday-school are to blame. Does it make the child less obedient, less loving to its parents? In this case also there is something wrong, and the Sunday-school is to blame. The true Sunday-school will lead children to a higher appreciation of the office of the Christian ministry, and will prepare them for its ministrations. And it will deepen their sense of the obligation to obey and to reverence their parents. If it does none of these things it is worse

than a failure—it is a hinderance to the work of God, and an encumbrance upon the energies of the Church.

It seems to us too plain for argument; the Sunday-school is auxiliary to other means of grace, and it is nothing else. It substitutes nothing—it cannot. It is to bring contributions of power to all other means of grace—especially to the Christian home and to the Christian ministry. But it must take nothing from these, and it must not hinder them.

In substantiation of these general views, it may be mentioned here that more and more, and in all quarters, the Sunday-school is being recognized as a part of the Church, and not as an independent and isolated institution. In some Churches provision is made for the government of the Sunday-school as part of the Church. This is very clearly recognized in the book of Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Among the duties of the Quarterly Conference we find this item: “To superintend the interests of Sunday-schools and the instruction of children, and to elect superintendents of Sunday-schools on nomination of the preacher in charge.” And this, in that Church, as proved by experience, is a good law.

Among the questions propounded by the bishop to those who, having satisfactorily finished their probation, are about to be “admitted into full con-

nection" in an Annual Conference is this: "Will you diligently instruct the children in every place?" The Discipline enjoins the formation of Sunday-schools in all the congregations. The language of the Discipline upon the entire subject shows that the Sunday-school is recognized as truly a part of the Church.

At this place we may quote with propriety a paragraph from an address delivered by the Rev. Bishop H. N. M'Tyeire before the Sunday-school Convention of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, that met in Nashville, Tennessee, May, 1871. Bishop M'Tyeire said:—

"The Sunday-school is of the Church; in every way it has been so recognized. It is set on the Lord's day; our houses of worship are open to it, notwithstanding they have been set apart from all unhallowed or common uses; in General, Annual, District, Quarterly, and Church Conferences, its interests are inquired into and its affairs regulated; ministers are detailed for its agency and editorial department; its statistics are displayed every-where on the face of ecclesiastical journals. It is not an alien and foreigner; it is not an outside friendly institution—it is nearer than that. The Sunday-school is the catechetical institute of the Church. It is maintained by and for the Church, and under the Church's control. . . . Let the Sunday-school be kept close to the Church, under its watchful eye,

near its warm heart. Let the pastor of the parents remember that he is the pastor of the children, and that Sunday-schools may help, but cannot supersede him. Let him be seen moving often among them, thus giving aid, and assurance of his interest. Bishop Andrew's last Sunday on earth saw him in the Sunday-school. Among his last words to the preachers were these: "Take care of the children · look after the Sunday-schools.'"

CHAPTER III.

THE CHIEF FUNCTION OF THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

TEACHING the word of God is, as we judge, the chief function of the Sunday-school.

Speaking through his servant Moses, God said to his people: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Here we find a divine statute of perpetual obligation upon all heads of families. If it were obeyed so perfectly that there remained nothing more to teach, it does not readily appear that there would be any need of Sunday-schools, or of any other teaching instrumentality for imparting to children a knowledge of God's word. If we ask now concerning the true work of the Sunday-school, or of any other such instrumentality as to children, we answer by asking, What does God require to be done for children? The words of Moses make this very

plain: "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children."

This involved, of necessity, the use of all right means for making the knowledge of God's words a real and true knowledge, by bringing heart and life under its influence. Now what God requires to be done for children, in order to their proper nurture in the life of religion, the Sunday-school should attempt to do.

If we once clearly understand what we consider a very plain matter, that the Sunday-school substitutes no other instrumentality for doing good, but that it is auxiliary to each and all of them, we will find no difficulty in determining the true work of the Sunday-school. In order to secure the supreme love of his people, God requires, first, that his words shall be in their hearts; and, secondly, in order to secure their perpetuation in the world, they shall be taught diligently unto their children.

There are many useful things that the Sunday-school may do, indirectly and incidentally. It is well that the children be taught to sing for the sake of singing itself. But it is especially useful if they learn to sing such songs as contain the marrow of the Gospel, and celebrate the praises of God. Alas! that much of the singing of our Sunday-schools cannot be approved on any ground. There is great danger of being misled right here. It is easy to interest children in singing, and it is certainly desira-

ble to do so. But the Sunday-school must be very much more than a mere singing-school. Good singing is desirable and delightful, but good singing alone is no right measure of a good Sunday-school.

Nor are mere numbers any just measure of the value of a Sunday-school. Some of the very best schools we ever saw were among the smallest ; while some of the very poorest were the largest. We have seen large schools that sang well, paid money well, drilled well, looked well, behaved well, where teachers and children evidently enjoyed themselves very much. But they failed in teaching God's word—failed just where it was most important to succeed and where failure was most fatal.

We must insist strenuously on this: the school that does not teach God's word, no matter what else it may attempt or accomplish, is a failure. As to the great end designed to be accomplished, there can be no two opinions. It is the same end that is sought in parental instruction, in the public preaching of the word, in the circulation of religious books and papers, in the entire machinery of the Church, namely, the salvation of the people. Parents instruct and train in God's word, preachers proclaim the Gospel, good men write, and print, and publish to accomplish this one thing—to save the people from their sins. No lower end can be considered for a moment. This thought should be ever before us.

But how are we to accomplish this? By doing exactly what God commanded his ancient people, and what, as truly, he now commands us to do—to teach his word diligently unto our children. Instruction in His “words” is the divinely appointed means for inducing repentance, and for fostering in his children the life of faith and righteousness. And we cannot do God’s work except in God’s way. His way is best; there is no other good way. He allows us no short cuts of human invention to accomplish results. The shortest, because the surest, way is to do just what God requires, and not something else that we have invented. It is God’s word that tells us not only how to be good, but also how to do good. And every-where, and always, and in every thing, God’s way is the best way.

What is the first and the chief direction given to those who would bring up their children in the “nurture and admonition of the Lord,” that they may “love the Lord . . . God with all” their “heart?” “And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children.” Why? Because this is God’s appointed means for accomplishing the end. Indeed, we can conceive of no other reason for giving the Bible to men but that its lessons should lead them to love God.

We would insist on this with all emphasis and in all possible ways. Parents, preachers, teachers, all who propose to do any good in the world, should

remember this: their chief business is to teach God's word. Why should children be taught the word of God? Because they are ignorant, of it and the knowledge of it will, if they will hear and heed, lead to their salvation. And it is the only knowledge that does save. Whenever we find a person, man or child, philosopher or peasant, if he be ignorant of God's word and we would do his soul good, we must teach him. We must teach him what he is, what God requires of him, and what he has done for him.

The teaching function of the Sunday-school must never be lost sight of—must never be subordinated. When we do this we abandon the original charter; we take up with a human invention instead of the divine direction on this subject. Not the man who talks most about it, but the best teacher of God's word is the best Sunday-school teacher. And the school where God's word is taught most diligently, thoroughly, and effectively is the best school of all.

There is no danger, if we understand aright what it is to teach the word of God, of falling into the very hurtful error that it is a mere intellectual drill—that teaching the commandments and teaching the multiplication table are the same thing in their character, and require only the same qualities and efforts. A heathen child, who never heard of God or his word, may be easily taught the multiplication table by one who is as ignorant of divine things as

himself. But teaching the word of God is a very different thing, and done under very different conditions both as it relates to the teacher and the learner. In the first place, the child makes no sort of opposition to the multiplication table. Tell him that "twice two are four," and the child has no possible objections to receiving the truth of what it learns. Tell the same child something of its own sins, of the necessity of repentance, of self-denial, and we will find that in this child, how young and tender soever, St. Paul's doctrine holds good: "The carnal mind is enmity against God." And because the "carnal mind is enmity against God," it is always true that there can be no effective saving teaching of God's word and of the plan of salvation without the blessing of the Holy Ghost. This is as true about the fireside and in the Sunday-school as in the pulpit. The parent who teaches well prays; so does the Sunday-school teacher who teaches well; so does the preacher who preaches well, *he prays*. We must not make mistakes here; to teach, we must have the Spirit's aid; to secure this we must pray for it. And how precious is the promise that encourages us to pray for the influences of the Holy Ghost! "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

We may begin the argument where we will, we

must ever come to the same conclusion—teaching God's word is the chief function of the Sunday-school. If we do every thing else and omit this we have failed.

Let us meditate upon the method of Ezra: "So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." This is a perfect description of the best preaching. And this is exactly what we all, who have any thing to do with the religious instruction of the people—adults and children—should strive diligently to do.

John S. Hart, LL.D., in his admirable work, "The Sunday-School Idea," after stating clearly and forcibly that "the first great aim, undoubtedly, is to bring the scholars to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, to secure their conversion," adds some valuable remarks on the duty of thorough indoctrination in the truths of religion. We quote one suggestive paragraph: "We must aim not only to bring the lambs into the fold, but to keep them there, and to give them due nurture and protection. The Sunday-school is an agency of the Church specially suited to do this part of the Christian work. The young Christian needs to be thoroughly grounded in doctrine. When a scholar is converted and joins the Church, our work with him is just begun. We must patiently and faithfully teach him the doctrines of the Bible. The truths of the Holy Script-

ures are the aliment by which the Christian grows. What the young disciple especially needs is, not only exhortation, but teaching. The pastor who is wise will spend much time in simple, instructive discourses, having for their aim to build up the young of his flock in sound Christian knowledge, and he will regard with peculiar satisfaction those of his helpers and fellow-laborers who in the Sunday-school carry out in detail, and apply to personal and individual cases, the portions of doctrine which he, from the pulpit, distributes in the mass and to the whole congregation.

“Nor should a teacher wait till a child is converted before beginning to instruct him in the truths of the Bible and the duties of the Christian life. The doctrines of the Bible, it should be remembered, are not only useful for growth in grace, but they are the most efficient means of conversion. While the teacher should not neglect the duty of personal appeal and exhortation, yet let him not forget that there is a mighty power in God’s word to pierce the heart and conscience. Let him unceasingly plant this divine seed in the minds of his scholars. It may lie long before it is quickened. The work of grace in a heart thus thoroughly indoctrinated in Scripture truth is much more glorious than that fitful excitement wrought by mere passionate appeals to the feelings. The great aim of the Sunday-school, then, is the conversion of the young, and the build-

ing up of its converts in holiness of heart and life, and the great means are their indoctrination in the truths of the Bible."

Some years ago an article from the pen of the Rev. W. C. Wilkinson appeared in the "Sunday-School Journal," which we introduce entire. Here are useful hints for parents and preachers as well as teachers:—

"Teach the children. Don't try to move their hearts, at least, not directly. It is a mistake to use the emotion which you have excited in yourself by thought, by study, by prayer, as the chief means of exciting emotion in your pupils. Emotion begets emotion, it is true, but it is the emotion of sympathy that is thus begotten. What you want is the emotion of intelligence. The emotion of sympathy is transient. It is a reflection which vanishes when the emotion that produced it is withdrawn. Besides, it is not a fruitful emotion. It is emotion, and nothing else. It even tends to impoverish instead of enrich. The heart is not fed—the heart is exhausted by it. On the contrary, the emotion of intelligence is as durable as emotion can be, or ought to be. It does not depend upon the presence of other emotion in some one else. It springs from within, and not from without. It is a product of thought.

"Therefore, *teach* the children. Feed them with knowledge. Set them to thinking. Thinking will

make them feel. Consider how you yourself came to feel as you do in meeting your class. You had used your mind. That is subject to your will. Your heart is not. You cannot feel by willing to feel, but you can think by willing to think. And after thinking, with thinking feeling comes without willing, nay, against willing even.

“It is natural to want a straight road to the heart; and the mind lies between. You must not seek, generally, to apply your own emotion to awake emotion. To excite emotion in another without first exciting thought, is like lighting a fire without using kindling. Thought is the kindling for setting emotion in a blaze. So aim to lead your class through a course of thought similar to that by which you were yourself led to feeling as you do.

“Teach, brethren and sisters, teach. Again, I say, *teach*. Christ was a teacher. For all that appears, he was himself outwardly calm when he taught. He trusted to the truth. You must trust to the truth. Never fear but if you reach the mind of your pupil with gospel truth—*gospel* truth, remember—the mind in turn will reach the heart with it. ‘Sanctify them through thy truth,’ was Christ’s prayer.

“The mind is the heart’s mouth. Thrust truth into the child’s mind. If it is the bread of life to the child, it will not stay in his mind; it will sink down deeper. It will go to his heart. And the

hunger of the heart will grow by what it feeds on. The heart will crave more and more forever. 'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.' Why? Because they will eventually cease from hungering and thirsting after righteousness? Not at all. That would be no blessing. It would be a curse. But because they shall be filled, and keep on hungering and thirsting, to be filled again and again. Feed the sheep. Feed the lambs. Truth is the bread of life. The mind is the mouth to the heart. Put truth into the mind. Teach, teach, teach!"

CHAPTER IV.

WHO SHOULD BE IN THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL?

MANY young people are of the opinion that only little children should be expected to attend Sunday-school, at least as regular scholars.

“How shall we retain our larger boys and girls?” is a question that has been very largely discussed. Every-where we have the complaint—our larger scholars, especially the boys, leave us. This seems to us to be a very great evil. Our boys leave us just when they ought to do their most profitable Bible study. This is a great loss to them and to the schools they leave. And what is worse, they drift away with bad company we know not whither.

In considering this problem we have raised in our mind another question, Should we not revise our notions on this whole subject of proper persons for Sunday-school work and instruction?

Up to this time most persons have thought of the Sunday-school only as a place where mere children can be taught the primary truths of religion. If our larger sons and daughters have concluded that the Sunday-school is simply a proper enough place for little children, we, their elders, who have undertaken to expound to them the Sunday-school idea,

are responsible. For, what is the drift of nearly all we say and write on the subject? That it is a good place for children, especially little children. We call it the "nursery of the Church," and we often manage the matter in such a way as to make it very doubtful what we mean by "nursery." * Very often the songs that are sung, the speeches that are made, the papers and books that are circulated, are only fit for the nursery; "Mother Goose Stories," with the *imprimatur* of the Church.

We grant readily that the Sunday-school is peculiarly adapted to children; we know, too, that it is far easier to secure their attendance and to excite their interest than that of the older ones. Why is this? There may be many reasons, some of them, doubtless, growing out of the restlessness and impatience of restraint that belongs to adolescent manhood and womanhood. But for this much-to-be-deplored state of things there is a reason in us and in our methods of dealing with our young people. We are at fault. We do not meet the wants of these larger ones as we do the wants of the little

* "Nursery, 2. The place where nursing is carried on; as, (a.) The place, or apartment, in a house, appropriated to the care of children. (b.) A place where young trees are propagated for the purpose of being transplanted; a plantation of young trees. (c.) The place where any thing is fostered and growth promoted. 'To see fair Padua, nursery of arts.'—*Shakspeare*. 'Christian families are the *nurseries* of the Church on earth, as she is the *nursery* of the Church in heaven.'—*J. M. Mason*."—WEBSTER.

ones. Our opinion, in short, is this: If our schools, in their methods and appliances, were as well adapted to the wants of our children just blooming into adult life as they are to our little children, then we would not lose the larger ones.

Take one case only for illustration—the papers that are distributed from Sunday to Sunday; for whom are these papers, for the most part, intended? The little ones—generally speaking, for those under fourteen years old. But boys and girls, nearly grown, soon tire of the “Sunday-School Visitor,” and “Child’s World,” and “Children’s Guide,” and “Sunday-School Advocate,” and “Kind Words,” and such like. Excellent as these papers are for mere children, they are not what the larger ones want. And, in most schools, there is nothing that meets the wants of our young people. The same state of things exists, to a large extent, in our Sunday-school libraries.

We go farther, without discussing the matter here: for the most part, our teachers in charge of Bible-classes do not, in their own studies, keep up with the development of the young people who look to them for instruction. But they ought, they must, keep in advance. It is a fatal day when the class discovers that the teacher is dropping behind in interest, in information, in application.

After long and patient reflection on this whole subject, we conclude—and we are glad to know that

we are not alone in the opinion—that we should conceive of the Sunday-school as the school of the whole Church. Some have, indeed, proposed to call it “Bible School.” But we do not see very clearly how this would remedy the evil we are now considering.

All should be in the Sunday-school—as scholars or as teachers. What reason can be given why an old member of the Church should not be a member of the Sunday-school? Why should not the oldest, and wisest, and saintliest man in the Church be a *scholar* in the Sunday-school, if he should not be needed as a teacher? We can think of but one reason, and that would not be good could it exist. And it never did, never will exist. If we could find a man who had learned so much of God’s word that there is no more in it to learn, we might excuse him so far as his need of instruction is concerned. But such a wonder, such a solitary phenomenon, would be under peculiar obligation to attend regularly and promptly to show what can be done by diligent and continued study!

Now, why should a child go to Sunday-school? To learn God’s word, that he may grow thereby “in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” For the very same reasons a grown man, however wise, however good, unless he can become no wiser and no better, should attend the Sunday-school. For the wisest and best need to be

enlightened and strengthened in spiritual things. And the wisest and best, of all others, most clearly see their ignorance and most keenly feel their deficiencies.

It is only the incorrigible egotist or the self-satisfied Pharisee who does not lament his lack of knowledge and his immaturity in grace.

We cannot conceive of a single objection to making the Sunday-school a Bible-school for the whole Church and congregation that cannot be easily met and answered.

Such an attendance would, indeed, overflow many of our Churches. But they could be built larger, or the congregation could "swarm" as the wise bees do, when overcrowded, and colonize in new quarters.

As things are now in many of our communities, there certainly needs to be a readjustment of our plans. We could name scores of churches where the following state of things exists: the house is *filled* with children at nine o'clock, and *filled* with grown people at eleven o'clock. Three-fourths of the children are absent from preaching, and three-fourths of the adults were absent from the Sunday-school. In many cases, indeed—if the preacher happen to be unattractive—a larger congregation is seen going from the Church when the Sunday-school is dismissed than is seen going to it.

What is to be done about this matter? We

nave slept over it long enough. When the children are not at the public worship of God with the congregation, when they do not attend the preaching of the word, something is wrong, very wrong. And it ought to be remedied. If there were no alternative and we had to choose between the two, we would say, the children should attend the preaching of the word even if they do not go to Sunday-school.

So, as the matter now stands, we have two serious evils to meet: the larger children do not go to Sunday-school, and the smaller children do not go to Church. This is a most unsatisfactory state of things. The larger ones—our almost grown-up children—ought to be in Sunday-school, and our younger children ought to attend public worship with the congregation. This double trouble is very largely the fault of us who are older—parents and preachers, superintendents and teachers—who have talked about the Sunday-school and managed it as if it were intended only for little children, and have conducted public worship as if that were intended only for adults.

What remedy have we? It seems to us to lie in two directions. First, we should try as hard in the Sunday-school to meet the wants of our young people as we do the wants of our children. We must make the Sunday-school as interesting and useful to the adolescents as to the infants. Secondly, let us

drop the "nursery" idea for a while. It has done good service and deserves superannuation—at least retirement—that it may rest, with "Washington's hatchet," for instance.

Let us quit talking of the Sunday-school as if we thought it only a fit place for little ones. Let us have something in it besides nursery rhymes, side-shows, magic lanterns, scene-shifting, little "wee-bit" papers, with pictures of nice children and good dogs—all, perhaps, more or less excellent in their way. But, in the name of common sense, let us have something else—something that will be to the older ones what the little papers and other such things are to the little ones.

But in dropping for awhile, or retiring to the back-ground, the "nursery" idea, let us who are neither children nor young people, let us who are their fathers, mothers, uncles, and aunts, march *en masse* into the Sunday-school and do what would be an unspeakable advantage to us—study and teach the word of God. If we will do this our older sons and daughters will go to Sunday-school and our younger ones will go to Church. He was right who at a convention answered the question, "How shall we retain our young people in the Sunday-school?" by saying, "Put the old people between them and the door." We cannot enumerate or overstate the blessings that would follow such a general study of the Bible as our view of the subject involves. Let

the Sunday-school be the Bible-school of the Church, of the whole Church.

We have one simple argument to offer as to the practicability and usefulness of the plan. It has been tested and proved. We have, here and there, a few well-attended, well-conducted adult classes. We have seen grandfathers in them. One class we could name of nearly a dozen where nearly all were over fifty years old. And for this class there was no happier or more profitable hour during all the week than the hour between nine and ten o'clock Sunday morning. They *studied* their lessons and their teacher studied them. Perhaps we should call him the *conductor* of the lesson, as all were pupils and all were teachers—"both hearing and asking him questions," as they felt inclined.

What these old men did others can do.

Why did they go to Sunday-school? They wished to learn more of God's word, and found it useful, for its good fellowship and mutual aid, to study in a class.

How did they manage to succeed so well? In the first place, they got up soon enough to go. This is quite important. People who lie in bed till nine o'clock Sunday morning will not be in Sunday-school at that hour. These old gentlemen really wanted to go—found pleasure and profit in going—and, therefore, determined that they would go. It was a part of their plan for Sunday morning and

and they took pains to work it out faithfully. When the bell rang these old gentlemen put on their hats and *went*.

This is the way they managed. It is so simple a plan that we fear it will not be popular. But it was effective, nevertheless.

CHAPTER V.

HUNTING PLANS.

WE received a letter once from which we may make a short extract here:—

“I am anxious to succeed—to do my full duty to the dear children of the school; but I sadly fear that I have not the best plan for conducting the school—of gaining attention, enlisting interest, inducing study, etc. I hear of so many plans—so many devices for amusing and interesting the children. Brother A. of D. does this, and Brother R. of G. this, and they are very different. What shall I do? Why don’t you tell us *just how* to conduct the Sunday-school?”

Of course we did not “prescribe” for his case, except in a very general way. Part of our answer, however, may be useful in this chapter of our discussion.

“There are hundreds, dear brother, in like perplexity. Sunday-school journals are full of such questions and attempted answers. The Sunday-school conventions often have what they call the ‘question box,’ into which all sorts of questions are thrust. Some one who is supposed to know every thing about Sunday-schools is appointed to open the

box and answer, without failing, or even hesitating, right then and there, whatever comes up. We have watched one such answerer of hard questions, who looked, when he opened the box, as wise as one supposes an ancient priest of Jupiter must have appeared when inspecting the entrails of the slain victims, or when watching the flight of wild geese, to determine future events—as wise as an owl. His answers to all sorts of questions were so complacently confident that it would have been almost an insult to have applied to him Sidney Smith's witticism on the learned Dr. Whewell. 'Whewell's *forte*,' said the wit, 'is science; his foible is omniscience.'

"We cannot say how we have wondered at the courage—audacity, perhaps, is the better word—of such an oracle; telling twenty different superintendents how to manage their schools, as coolly and unhesitatingly as a broker tells the price of gold or bonds. And he did it with a certain epigrammatic flourish, that snapped like a silk cracker to a stage-driver's whip. As if he knew any thing about the peculiarities of these various schools! It is preposterous.

"Some people call such 'replies' to the conundrums of the question box the 'practical' part of a Sunday-school convention. For our part, we pronounce these off-hand, yet 'cut and dried,' answers to be of all things the most impracticable. Often

these so-called answers are not the expression of even one man's experience; your convention oracle, who can answer questions faster than did that superb old humbug at Delphi, not being every time a Sunday-school man at all, except as he talks the subject up or down, as the case may be. It is a great mistake to suppose that the man who volunteers answers to all sorts of questions knows what he is talking about. A strange fatality seems often to seal the lips of those who really know how to do things. But this is not so strange to us as the un-failing eloquence of those who do not know how to do any thing.

“We shall never forget a notable planter's convention, that met in a southern city some years ago. There were not less than two hundred of the most sagacious and successful planters in the country in the convention; but the chief speakers were three fluent gentlemen who had a State reputation for being unsuccessful in whatever they had undertaken—a preacher, an ex-politician, and an editor. Which was the greatest genius was hard to determine. But neither of them knew what every body else knew—that they were, in spite of all their genius for fine theorizing and fine talking, very impracticable visionaries. We suppose that neither one of them could make a living on the best farm in the land. But they could speak. And speak they did, long and often, and with a persuasive eloquence that won

applause at least, and made men who had grown rich on poor land ashamed to tell what sort of plows they used.

“What is the moral of this story? Why, dear brother, that you are not to carry home from the next convention you attend, or to gather out of the next over-confident article you may read, a whole armful of new plans, devices, notions, tricks, and charms, ‘warranted to cure all diseases’ known to Sunday-schools.”

Now in the face of all this we are going to venture something like an answer to our perplexed brother’s hard questions.

I. “What shall I do?” he asks.

Answer. Do *your* best, not somebody else’s best. You can’t be Brother A. of D., and Brother A. can’t be you. And your schools are as different as their superintendents. The same plan does not suit all soils. Moreover, if you attempt to imitate A. or R., you will be sure to catch their weak points, and apt to miss their strong ones. Remember David, who would not fight with Saul’s armor because he had not “proved it.” He could do better with his sling than with the king’s sword and spear, his shield and his helmet. But Saul, may be, could not have used the shepherd-boy’s sling at all. Most likely he would have missed the giant, big as he was, and given his own head a hard rap into the bargain.

To be sure, you are to find out how others do—

how they fail as well as how they succeed. But "prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

2. "Why don't you tell us just how to conduct the Sunday-school?"

Answer. We are too far off. We would have to attend your school and work in it a month, for a full month, as superintendent, before we could know it well enough to guess at a solution of your particular difficulties. Managing Sunday-schools and putting up prescriptions are quite different things. The chemist has his acids and alkalies and such like. He can follow the formula and is sure of the result. It is always the same. But even he—if he be neither fool nor knave—would hesitate if called on to put up a complicated prescription, combining new and unknown elements, for an unknown ailment, prescribed for by clairvoyance. You have seen some of these wretched humbugs, pirates upon humanity, sailing under medical flags they have stolen. Sometimes you see their pretentious advertisements, proposing by clairvoyance to make in New York an infallible diagnosis of some mysterious disease in Texas, and to prescribe a certain and speedy cure.

Now did we even know exactly what is the matter with your school, and did we know exactly what to prescribe, you would not find it like putting up prescriptions in a drug store. Those who manage teachers, and parents, and children, and who must themselves be managed, cannot work by exact for-

mulæ. Therefore, we can't tell you "just how to conduct" your school; and no man who has good sound sense will try.

But we may offer you a few hints in quite a general way.

1. You are *in earnest*. This is well; it is essential. If you are not in earnest, we advise you and beg you to resign at once. If you are not in earnest, the only service you can do your school is to resign. Would that more men had this grace to resign when they are not in earnest, or, being in earnest, have the misfortune to occupy wrong positions! The wrong man in the right place is a very unsatisfactory person. But you are in earnest, and there is hope and the promise of great success in being in earnest. We have not yet learned the power there is in downright earnestness. It can work impossibilities—to those who are not in earnest.

The school, dear brother, ought to rest on your heart till you *feel* it. But take kindly a well-meant caution; *don't fret* over your school. Worry is much worse than work. Worry often kills men, work seldom. We have known many preachers fail by being over-anxious to succeed. One case we remember quite distinctly. A brother—a man of gifts, graces, and energy—was appointed to a most responsible charge. He ought to have succeeded and would have done so had he known how to manage himself. He started at his very best, and

strained himself lame trying to surpass his best speed. He was soon "knocked up."

We inquired after him of a friend who understood the case, "How is Brother —— getting on?"

Our friend answered, "You have seen a picture of a race-horse on the course?"

"Yes."

"Did you observe that his ears were laid back, and that his head and tail were both straight, and about on a level with each other?"

"Just so."

"Well, that's the way Brother —— is; he is failing because he is trying so hard to succeed."

And it was so—he exhausted himself with his anxieties.

The best advice, for such a case, we ever received was from a certain bishop, honored and beloved. We were entering upon a work that we were afraid of—it was too heavy for us. He saw the apprehension that tried us, and one day he said, "I want to give you some advice." We fairly jumped with joy. We wanted advice above all things, and from him above all men. Sitting down by him, our willing soul waited for the words of wisdom. We were in for an hour's talk. This is what he said—all of it: "Go to——. Do your work the best you can. Trust God, and don't worry about success."

The more we pondered his words the wiser they seemed to us. They were providential. We took

his advice, did our best, trusted God, and did not worry about success. One result, at least, was, we were happy, and what is more, were at rest while at our work.

He who keeps himself strained up to his highest running speed all the time does not make the best progress on a long journey. There is much difference between a spurt and a four-mile course. And when you come to make a long journey "Dobbin" and his "jog-trot" will beat "Eclipse," or any other racer at his best. Do not mistake morbid nervousness for zeal.

2. *Be systematic.* It is one condition of success. It is as needful in the Sunday-school as in the counting-room or the machine shop. If you get at loose ends you will soon ravel out. If the screws and bolts of your engine are loose, you will soon rattle it to pieces. And the faster you go the sooner it is done. But don't turn the screws too tight, you may break something. Possibly a martinet in the small matters of army-drill may be of some use, but martinets have no business running Sunday-schools. Genuine system is an easy-going thing. Like well-made and well-oiled machinery, it runs with little noise. If what you call system makes a noise, or heats the axles, it is something else. True system prevents and reduces friction; the counterfeit develops it.

We have seen brakemen who knew exactly how

to stop a train. They applied the brake in such a way as to bring down the speed regularly and easily, so that the train seemed to glide into a full stop. The whole thing is so easily done that it wouldn't wake a baby, or give an old man's rheumatism an extra twinge. Others "put down the brake" with such a wrench that the whole train groans, and quivers, and jumps, and bumps, and thumps, till sleeping babies are rolled off the seats upon the floor, mothers are frightened, old gentlemen hurt all over, and every body is disturbed.

Happy is he whose system makes things go easily instead of roughly. We have known superintendents so intent on what they called system as to destroy, by their ugly frowns, and quick, sharp ways, and snappy words, and incessant bell-jingling, the pleasure and profit of an entire Sunday morning. Better not try to be systematic than to worry yourself sick, and to make every body else miserable about it.

True system avoids friction, and jolts, and jars, and hurts.

3. *Have patience as well as perseverance.* These graces are sometimes confounded with each other. But they are very different, though sometimes beautifully blended. There are more persevering than patient people. We know people who will stick to a thing through thick and thin, who will go through what they undertake if it kills them; but they fret,

and growl, and whine, and complain, and criticise, and scold from beginning to end. They have perseverance such as it is. They drag the train through, but with hot axles and damaged machinery. Withal there is much smell of burning car grease, and great danger of general conflagration.

Happy is he who perseveres in a good work patiently!

With this much concerning patience we say, *stick to your work*. Perseverance will conquer—always has conquered. And don't get out of heart if you fail at first. Most people have failed twice where they have succeeded once. Those who ever do any thing worthy fail first. In fact we can't learn to do some things till we fail. You are not the first man who has failed; you will not be the last. Remember your old copy—"Rome was not built in a day." And that is not all; Rome never got itself built aright till it was burned down several times. Fail and learn why. The lesson will redeem the failure. This leads to success. Dear brother, hundreds of schools fail and die because their superintendents lose heart and quit. Do you stick to your work.

But, we say again, be patient. Take things easy, although you must work very hard. You can work hard and be quiet; you can persevere and be patient. The fact is, you *must* be patient. There is no getting on without it. You will have need of patience. You will not find your teachers always in

their place, or always prepared to teach. Sometimes they will be late, sometimes they will be absent. All this is bad, but fretting and scolding wont make it better—rather, worse. And some people—if you are of any account—will find fault with you. What of that? Are you the first good man ever criticised, complained of, misrepresented? There have been always people who complain, and criticise, and misrepresent. They called John the Baptist a madman, and said he “had a devil;” the same people called Jesus a “glutton” and “a wine-bibber.”

Besides, you ought to remember how you used to do when Brother —— was superintendent and you were a teacher. You will remember that you gave him some hard raps. May be he deserved criticism—but not the raps. Perhaps you also deserve criticism, and have received the “raps” for good measure, according to the example you set. When a man finds fault with you, instead of getting mad and proving his accusation by the bad temper with which you receive it, look into the matter. Perhaps he is right. May be you can amend. If so, what a duty—what a privilege!

This brings us to name another grace—a ripe fruit of the Spirit—*meekness*. Perseverance is good, patience is better, meekness is best. Can we not say when the wise and the good, our best and truest friends, reprove us: “Let the righteous smite me;

it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities."

4. *Study the lesson.* The lesson is the central idea. Drive a post down here. We do not forget in saying this that the grand end is the salvation of the children. That is always understood, but the lesson is the central idea because it is about God and Christ, and the true knowledge of God is the grand means of salvation. Once more we say, if you do not teach you fail. Exhortations, songs, addresses, anecdotes, and all manner of light drill, cannot substitute the lesson. You must be an example of studiousness to the teacher. Although you may never hear a class, every teacher and scholar should know that you make it a matter of conscience to prepare every lesson. Want of study—hard, earnest study—is one of the greatest evils among teachers and scholars. If you, as superintendent, study the lesson as you ought, there may be—there will be—contagion in your example.

5. *Be of good cheer.* Despondent, morose you must not be. For pity's sake, don't drive the light out of young eyes by darkness in your own. It is a high Christian duty to be cheerful. Christian cheerfulness is a grace, and it is also a means of grace. But mind you, cheerfulness and levity are very different things. You have no business with levity.

If you have any conscience and know how responsible your office is, trifling you cannot be. Your best spiritual power will evaporate if you fall into habitual levity. Cultivate Christian cheerfulness. If you have chronic melancholy, go on a marooning expedition, or a buffalo hunt, or a whaling voyage, or something, but don't throw a chill over a whole Sunday-school by the clouds that darken your face.

6. *Attempt and expect great things.* "According to your faith be it unto you." So spake the Master. If you expect to fail, you will not be disappointed. If you expect to fail, get out of the way at once. It will save time, and perhaps "feelings." There are few sublimer words than Carey's, when he was pleading for foreign missions before a prejudiced audience in Northampton, England. He had two points in his sermon, thus: "1. Attempt great things for God. 2. Expect great things from God."

7. *Ask God to help you.* This you will do if you attempt great things for God. Pray for guidance and support. Above all, pray that you may have in your own heart, as an abiding presence, "the mind that was in Christ." Then you also will be "moved with compassion on souls." If your heart is full of this feeling you will learn what it is necessary for you to know.

Finally, dear brother, do your work earnestly, systematically, perseveringly, patiently, meekly, studiously, cheerfully, prayerfully. "Attempt great

things for God ;” “ expect great things from God ;” leave results with God. The exhortation of St. Paul is always appropriate for workers in God’s field : “ And let us not be weary in well-doing ; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” And the exhortation of St. James is always a good reproof of our unbelief : “ Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient ; stablish your hearts : for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.”

CHAPTER VI.

THE POWER OF THE RIGHT SPIRIT.

THERE is no end to our discussions, in all sorts of Church papers and Church conferences, of method. Is there any evil in the Church, somebody answers, Let us tighten this screw, or lengthen this band, or shorten this shaft, or move this wheel. Is there some trouble in the Sunday-school, somebody suggests tinkering with its machinery. We are too apt to consider these subjects in the spirit of the machinist, who, detecting an irregularity of motion, is sure that the trouble is in the machinery itself, and that it can be remedied by overhauling and readjusting its parts. The machinist is right. The machinery cannot go wrong when its parts are rightly adjusted and the requisite power is applied. But nations, communities, families. Churches, Sunday-schools are not mere machines, and cannot be forced into proper action by mechanical appliances. There has been no end of experiments, great and small, in this matter. Government and management of men by mere force of machinery may seem to do well enough for a time, but it is all wrong and contrary to nature. It breaks down—it is obliged to do so.

We can estimate the power of an engine, and tell

exactly what it can do. But we cannot do this in our estimate of the influences that determine the conduct and mold the character of men. "There is a spirit in man," and the powers that affect him are chiefly spiritual. He who would do good to men, and does not know this, has every thing to learn.

For our part, we believe in system, order, method, to the full extent of our capacity to understand their value. We know that learning, genius, zeal, often waste themselves in fruitless, self-destructive exertions, for the lack of method. We have no confidence in blind force. Crooked and gnarled oaks cannot be split in straight lines, or by the blunt end of the wedge with ever so great an outlay of power. Power working in the wrong direction is at a ruinous disadvantage, and the greater the power, in such a case, the greater the danger, damage, and disaster. Right adjustments seem to multiply power indefinitely, for while they may not increase it absolutely, they utilize it and show us the results—and we judge power by its results. But when we are considering the influences that move men, let us never forget what it is easy to forget, what we cannot overvalue or adequately describe, *the power of the right spirit*.

A young girl is married and moves into her new home. She is inexperienced, and will often burn her fingers, spoil the breakfast, and fret her soul before she attains to her mother's perfection in house-

keeping. The good mother may tell her all and show her all, and furnish a whole library of books on cooking and housekeeping; but if the daughter have not the true housewife spirit, she will fail in spite of printed directions and maternal counsels. But if she have the true housewife spirit she will learn from all teachers, or learn without them.

If a boy have no inventive genius and no love for the mechanic arts, the life-long study of models and authorities would never make him an inventor. But if he have the right mechanical spirit within him—if he have true inventive genius, with teachers or without them, he will learn. Deprive him of ordinary facilities, he will make them for himself, or invent better ones. Shut him up to his own resources, and he will study dynamics from nature, and learn from his failures the secret of success.

Books might be written filled with illustrations of this principle. Artists, mechanics, scientific discoverers, indeed, all the great workers, show that they won success for their work by the power of the right spirit that was in them.

Far more important than the question of method, is that of the right spirit. For the right spirit will surely find for itself the best methods for the exertion of its power. Let our law-makers go on perfecting, as best they can, the machinery of the Church, but, above all, let them seek for the right spirit in the work of the Church. Let our Sunday-

school people find out and tell to others the best methods; but, above all, let them work in the right spirit. We shall find, at last, that the right method is a natural development and expression of the right spirit.

We know a man who for several years accomplished a great deal of good as the superintendent of two Sunday-schools. One of them was part of a rich and strong Church, the other was called a "Mission-school." Tried by the final test, both schools succeeded, because in both many children were happily converted to God. But our friend was ill at ease because many of the children remained unconverted. This was well, and this anxious interest in the salvation of the children was one secret of his power. A superintendent who could be satisfied while even *one* of his children is an unpardoned, unsaved sinner, is unworthy his position.

On one occasion our friend wrote us a personal letter, not intended for publication, but, as we give no name, he will pardon us, should this ever meet his eye, for trying to make his example useful to others.

He gave some account of his work in the two schools and wound up thus:—

"I shall make a special effort to secure the salvation of these children. I believe that God will grant me my desire. I pray for them, and I have faith. I know he is a prayer-answering God. I

thank him for a humble place in which I can work. Pray for me, my dear brother. I have the weight and burden of these children upon my inmost soul."

And this man worked just as he wrote. Now to this brother, and through him to others, we wish to say several things.

First of all, he ought to be very thankful. To have an earnest purpose to do good and glorify God is a great blessing. Our friend is neither rich, nor learned, nor eloquent. But God has given him "a place in which he can work," a heart for his work, and grace to do his work. During several years past he has been gaining in power and skill. It was very hard and awkward at first. We were with him at the beginning, and feared much that his repeated failures would discourage him altogether. But he learned wisdom, and grew in strength and grace while trying to do what lay before him. Carlyle says truly in one place, and the words have been a blessing to the writer of this little volume, "Do the duty that is nearest thee; the next will already have become plainer."

The children converted in these two schools during our friend's superintendency were counted by the score. One good, strong Church has grown out of the mission-school.

In the short extract we have given from his letter it is all explained. It is well to inquire diligently concerning method, and means, and plans, and rem-

edies. It is always best to work in the best way. But if we feel as our brother did when writing his letter to us, and while conducting his two Sunday-schools, we will find out the best methods and plans. If we do not feel so, all the plans and methods in the world cannot help us. For zeal, patience, energy, good sense, faith, love, and prayer, there are no substitutes. Lacking these, we must fail. Some points in our friend's letter we must recall for a moment.

"I thank Him for a humble place in which to work." We rejoice in the spirit of a man who thanks God "for a place in which to work," although it may be but a "humble place." This is the Christ-spirit, "I delight to do thy will, O my God." A reluctant service discredits our profession and destroys our usefulness. Whoever loves God aright will be glad to labor in his cause, finding the dignity and importance of the work in the source of command, rather than in the nature of the work itself. So do the good angels rejoice to do the work God gives them to do. We see one bringing a message to the princely Abraham under the oaks at Mamre, and another, with as swift wing and ready grace, discovering to outcast Hagar a fountain of water. The angels came singing over Bethlehem, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will to men," to tell the world that the Redeemer-king was born in Bethlehem. Again we see

them keeping watch with the stars over dying Lazarus, and giving escort to his ransomed spirit as he ascended to Abraham's bosom.

Fretting and whining over our work for God is a sin. Gratitude to Him "who hath redeemed us and bought us with his own blood," should make us rejoice in his work. It is pitiable and shameful to hear some men talk about the "sacrifices"—as they say—of the Christian ministry; to see a young man "called of God to preach" the blessed Gospel, hesitating and shrinking and mourning over the "sacrifice" he makes in "giving up the law," or "medicine," or "merchandise"—this is a shame to rouse just indignation. If the great God condescends to allow any poor, pardoned sinner to invite his fellow-sinner to Christ, he should shout for joy—he should make his whole life an anthem of rapturous gratitude.

David Livingstone, one of the truest heroes, most devoted Christians, and most unselfish lovers of his race, in writing of the dangers and hardships of his missionary travels in Africa has wisely and beautifully written in his journal, and only a year or two before he died: "I do not mention these privations as if I consider them to be '*sacrifices*;' for I think that the word ought never to be applied to any thing we can do for Him who came down from heaven and died for us."

Our brother furthermore understood very clearly

that though machinery may be perfect, it is nothing without power. Very many do not understand this. Therefore, while doing his best to secure the most thorough organization of his school, to ascertain and employ the best methods of instructing and governing the children, he made the whole great work committed to him a matter of special, earnest, and continued prayer. It does not occur to a man who is not deeply in earnest to pour out his soul in asking for divine aid—he does not feel the need of it. It is only when the heart is “moved” with something like that “compassion” that Jesus felt for the famishing multitude that the utter insufficiency of all human strength is painfully felt. Then the good man flies to the Strong for strength.

We commend to all who labor for the conversion of children or adults—to pastors, superintendents teachers, and parents—these words of our friend, who felt that a great work was to be done, that it must be done, that he was very weak, and that God was almighty and willing to help him:—

“I believe that God will grant me my desire. I pray for them; I have faith. I know that he is a prayer-answering God. I have the weight and burden of these children upon my inmost soul.”

If we “have the weight and burden of the children upon our inmost soul,” and if we “have faith” also, we will solve all the difficulties of our work. We will accept difficulties and discouragements as

part of our discipline, and by divine grace will overcome them all. Zeal, and faith, and love, will teach us how to do all that the Master requires of us.

We cannot better conclude this chapter than by giving an extract from an article published in the "Sunday-school Magazine" in January, 1873, entitled "A True History." The writer, whom we know to be reliable, tells how one superintendent succeeded in doing a good and great work in a city in Alabama. The writer says:—

"About five years since the school was put under the superintendence of an untried man, since which time a new era in its history has commenced, with much more satisfactory results. Now, our young people remain with us, are punctual in their attendance, and most warmly attached to the school—promising to develop into just such a generation of Methodists and Sunday-school workers as the times and the people require. This change I, in common with the other teachers, attribute to the influence of the superintendent. Therefore, as showing the best means for retaining our young people, I would state what his course has been.

"When placed in charge he was comparatively without experience, but was known as an earnest, prudent worker. In addition to the usual routine pointed out by the best publications to be had, two general ideas appeared to have possession of his mind, and to govern his administration:—

“1. That the Sunday-school had an evangelical, religious character to be developed and improved.

“2. That the pupils were to be influenced by the evangelical religious character and spirit of the teachers.

“This was placing the institution on a new basis, causing it to be regarded rather as a children’s Church than a school—the object being the conversion of the children under Gospel teaching, enforced by loving hearts; which result was prayed for and expected, at any and all times, without waiting for the influence of revival seasons, but hailing such opportunities with gladness, and using them to advantage when they came.

“To make himself acquainted with the pupils he visited them extensively; so much so that few, if any, of the two or three hundred members of the school had failed to see him at their homes more than once during the year; and in cases of sickness, or other affliction, he was with them often as a sympathizing friend. Thus hearts were warmed and won.

“Having thus shown himself to be the most earnest worker among them all, the teachers were prepared to submit to such changes as he suggested among the classes when reorganizing. Worth, hitherto obscured, was brought out and employed, earnest industry in study was rewarded, and those of artificial mold led to value real character.

“ Each Sabbath found him well prepared to apply with tact and earnestness the main points in the lesson to both teachers and pupils. His heart was in his words, and his short, pithy sermons impressed us all

“ Knowing, as he did, that most children who are instructed sigh—if they do not cry out—for a knowledge of ‘ what they must do to be saved ’ long before such feelings are generally expected, he was always on the watch for symptoms of the operation of awakening grace, and prompt to treat them as the case required. Such a spirit and example could not fail to stimulate his teachers to more earnest work. They, too, visited, exhorted, prayed, and watched ; and their appeals to the members of their respective classes to give their hearts to Christ were not in vain. Many have done this. No wonder, then, that they love the Sabbath-school.

“ Here, then, is the cure for the great evil we have suffered by our young people leaving us. I repeat with confidence : the Sunday-school, worked as an evangelical, religious institution, and the Church working earnestly in it, under a good superintendent, will keep our young people with us. In day-schools and colleges, in business and in society, the young find those who want them—seeking them where they may be found. And shall the Church show less zeal or wisdom in this respect ? . . .

“ In conclusion, let me say that our prayer-meet-

ings, class-meetings, Sabbath congregations, and sacramental tables are now filled up with a due proportion of the youth taught in our Sabbath-schools, many of whom have now taken positions in business and society; yet they attend, and, from present indications, will continue to do so. I again repeat, here is the cure for the evil we suffer by our young people leaving us: *Work by the Church in the Sunday-school, under the direction and leadership of a right-minded superintendent.*

“Is this too much to ask?”

“This will we not say in word or act. If ‘the love of Christ constrain us,’ and if, for his sake, we be willing to toil and to wait, we shall realize what his word assures us: ‘Our labor shall not be in vain in the Lord.’”

Who of us all can measure the power of devotion, of true enthusiasm for God’s work by those who love him? Jean Ingelow says as beautifully as truly, “The man to follow in any cause, let it be what it will, is he who loves it well enough to fling into it every thing he has in this world, and then thinks that is not enough, and so flings himself in after it. This last item often weighs down the scales held in heaven, and he gets what he gave himself for.”

CHAPTER VII.

A LIGHT IN A DARK PLACE.

WE have a friend who is young, educated, and a Methodist. He is a cotton-planter, whose plantation is in an out-of-the-way place. He lives on his plantation, and has little congenial society. Most of his neighbors are poor and ignorant. The neighborhood church—Hopewell, they call it—is weak. The house is uncomfortable, and the membership small. They lack, not only money and numbers, but organization and enterprise. Hopewell is really in a sad condition, and it is much to be feared that the old logs are not the only things that are falling into decay. One of the worst features of the case is that the members have no confidence in themselves. They are, as the soldiers used to say, “demoralized.” It is a bad state to be in—for a man, a woman, a child, a family, an army, a community, a Church, or a nation. It is the paralysis of faith and the death of energy.

Hopewell has had no proper head since the good man died who gave the land it is built on, and who sleeps under the cedars in the little grave-yard close by. The neighbors often think of him and talk over his virtues, and wish that he were with them

again. They would rejoice to see him in his place once more. Dear old Brother Greatheart, every body loved, trusted, and followed him. He was every thing while he lived—the head, the tongue, the hand, the foot, the purse of Hopewell. No wonder they miss him. His advice was their law, and his opinion was their gauge of the new preacher's abilities. If he frowned during the delivery of the first sermon, or shrugged his shoulders when they asked him what he thought, the new preacher's fate was sealed—"he wont do." If he smiled with satisfaction, or wept under the exhortation, or praised him when the benediction was pronounced, he was accepted of all men. Candor compels us to admit that Brother Greatheart was apt to like best the preacher he had asked for when the presiding elder was on his last round. But in this, perhaps, he has many imitators, who mean well enough, but whose pique at disappointment sometimes warps their judgment of the new preacher's ability.

While Brother Greatheart lived he did whatever was done at Hopewell. He was the greatest man in their neighborhood; and while some called him "Brother," others "Father," or "Uncle," or "Grandfather" Greatheart, the truth is, whether any of them knew it or not, he was, while yet among them, their real king. And no wonder, for they needed a king, and Jeremiah Greatheart was their ablest and best.

The commander of men," says Thomas Carlyle, 'is called Rex, Regulator, Roi; our own word is still better—King, Könning, which means, Can-ning, able man." According to Mr. Carlyle, the true king then, is one who *Can*. Brother Greatheart was, to the Hopewell Church and neighborhood, such a man. Another English writer, Mr. Freeman, derives our word king after another fashion. Thus: "Cyning, by contraction King, is evidently closely connected with the word Cyn or Kin. The connection is not without an important meaning. The king is the representative of the race, the embodiment of its national being, the child of his people and not their father." This also made Brother Greatheart king—he was *kin* to nearly every body round about Hopewell, albeit rather in the relation of father than child. Another eminent scholar, Sir F. Palgrave, derives King from "Cen," a Celtic word signifying the head. By this token also Brother Greatheart was king. He was their ablest man, their head-man, and kinsman to them all.

Maybe some of our readers never heard of this "king of men," Brother Greatheart. They even know more of Agamemnon. This proves that they have never been to Hopewell.

We have sometimes thought that possibly Brother Greatheart did too much—rather that the rest of them did too little. They never did enough to find out that they could do any thing. Their opinion

was that Brother Greatheart was the best trustee, class leader, steward, and manager-general of a Church in the circuit, or in the conference.

When he died they were lost, and men and women asked each other at his grave, "What will become of Hopewell now?" They had depended on him so long that they depended on him altogether. Emerson's brief and specific formula for the cure of egotism they would have rejected with disdain if it had been applied to Brother Greatheart, "The world needs every man; but not much." And we have seen some persons who aspired to be kings on a wider scale, who seemed to us not to understand this.

At all events Brother Greatheart is dead, and the dear people are like a little flock of sheep that have lost their leader. What is to become of the little Church we cannot tell. The old house will fall down for one thing, if they will only let it alone another winter or two. It is said that the presiding elder is advising about "leaving it off the plan of the circuit" next year. The outlook is certainly far from promising.

Let us sum up the general status as things are and have been for some time. The old Red-Oak Circuit, which once boasted, when this writer was on his first itinerant rounds, twenty-one appointments, has been divided and subdivided till we must call, for propriety's sake, the little corner in which Hopewell falls, Pea Patch Circuit. There are only

five Churches, and Hopewell, being the weakest, is the "Saturday appointment." When they found out that they were to have "Sunday preaching" no more, they knew for certain that Brother Greatheart was dead. As long as he lived he managed to stave off this misfortune. But what is a poor circuit-rider to do when he has five Churches, and each one clamors for Sunday preaching? If there were only five Sundays in every month he could fix it! As there are only four in most months, Hopewell has had to compromise, that is, take what she could get, on "Saturday preaching" once a month and the "fifth Sundays."

It is said by some, with what truth we know not, that since the circuit was reduced—one of the arguments being that there would be more time for pastoral visiting—there is actually less pastoral visiting than when the old Red-Oak numbered twenty-one Churches. "They say" the explanation is found in the fact that the preacher can easily reach the most distant appointment, Mount Carmel, by leaving home after early breakfast Sunday morning. And "they say" furthermore, that first one cause and then another often carries him home Sunday night. Hopewell, as we fear, has "Saturday preaching" in more senses than one. It seems that the preacher is not expected to do his best at Hopewell, with its small Saturday congregation.

So the preacher comes and goes, and the old

church is generally closed till the next "circuit preaching." There is a "protracted meeting" just after the "crop is laid by" and before "fodder-pulling time."* This galvanizes them into unwonted zeal, and they "start" a prayer-meeting that holds on for about one month, and then dwindles down to the brother who "sets the tune," and "who is fond of it,"—that is, of setting the tune. In the spring, when other things are budding, the preacher "starts" a Sunday-school. It rarely lives a month.

It is doubtful if they start any thing next year. Sunday-school, prayer-meeting, and all will probably freeze down to the roots this winter. The fact is, the preacher has lost heart and faith. Which died first, his zeal or his faith, he himself, perhaps, could not say. As to the Sunday-school, the people have about concluded against it; some that they can't have it, others that they don't want it. Practically, the distinction between these opinions is not worth pointing out.

Hopewell, as the case stands now, is virtually without class-meeting, prayer-meeting, or Sunday-school. How much preaching do they have? The Annual Conference and its changes takes one appointment,

* This is a more important statement than some city reader may imagine. A complaint was once made against the Rev. John Strickland, a pioneer preacher in Georgia, whose memory is still precious, "that he would just as soon start a meeting right in the middle of fodder-pulling time as any other time."

stormy weather another; and if for any cause, as Quarterly or District Conference, or camp-meeting, the preacher should "call in" one appointment, there are three months out of the twelve when Hopewell has no preaching, or any thing else. Its annual average is not above nine appointments for regular "circuit preaching." To these add fifth Sundays, the "protracted meeting," an occasional sermon by some good local preacher who compassionates the "little flock," and we have the sum total of public services for Hopewell Church during the whole year.

It is not to be wondered at that things get a little loose sometimes. If matters cannot be improved Hopewell had better be "absorbed" before it is utterly "disintegrated."

But let us not misjudge them. There are good, religious people at Hopewell. They would be glad to do good if they only knew how. But the leading man now, Brother Greatheart's oldest son, is not a man who *can*. At least, *he thinks he can't*, and that is about the same thing. We are not sure that he wants to lead, but as he is Brother Greatheart's son, and is the best talker, or the most influential man among them, the people wait for him and he waits. So they have been going on, rather not going on, for several years.

There are very few books among the neighbors and but one "Advocate" is taken, and Widow

Greatheart takes that. They pay a small part of their small assessment for quarterage; missionary money and the "conference collection" they do not expect to be asked for. Some of the younger ones have never heard these collections mentioned, and do not know the difference between them. The Hopewell people have only one general idea about Church finances—that they can't do much. But there is one other notion among them, vague and nebulous; whence they derived it nobody knows; they think there is a "fund" somewhere to keep things going. Perhaps they "evolved" the notion from their knowledge of how very little they do, and from the fact that the Church don't stop! Somehow the "preacher comes" every year, and they conclude that there must be a "fund" somewhere. Alas! this dreamy notion of a "big fund" somewhere has made very small indeed the "fund" in many a poor preacher's pocket. What if the preacher's "fund" of devotion to the cause were as small as his money "fund?"

Of course Hopewell don't grow—it can't. It has nothing to grow on. It does not quite hold its own, the gain from the protracted meeting not keeping up with the loss by emigration, death, and defection. The older people are getting older and will soon be gone; but few of the young people are being brought into the Church. Some of them go to other Churches.

The Baptists—the missionary Baptists, we mean—are “wise in their generation.” They have been concentrating of late. They have a few strong, well located Churches—the river in one end of the county and the creek in the other winding about quite conveniently. Now and then they get some of Hopewell’s young people. Old Sister Greatheart took a quiet cry when they told her that one of her granddaughters, and a namesake at that, had been “immersed.” We have not the heart to blame the child much. Bethabara has a very good Sunday-school in which Bessie learned some very sweet songs, and there was a crowd there and it looked like something. For our part we had a thousand times rather she would join at Bethabara than stay out in the cold. But some of the young people go nowhere, unless it be to a singing-match at some neighbor’s. This furnishes a pretext for idling and talking through the Sunday.

Widow Greatheart took a much harder cry soon after Bessie’s conversion when she learned that Bessie’s brother had spent a whole Sunday rabbit hunting. It was enough to have broken his old grandfather’s rest if he only knew it. We hope he did not. We heard a quaint old preacher say once: “No bad news goes to heaven; all letters sealed in black go to hell.” Who knows?

What has all this to do with our friend the cotton planter, who is young, educated, and a Methodist?

Much every way. First of all he lives there, and not by chance. His father owned the place before the war and kept a "quarter" there. Since the war the old gentleman has died—entered into his eternal rest, there is every reason to believe. In the division of his estate this out-of-the-way place fell to our friend, his eldest son. He does not like living there, and this is natural. It seems never to have occurred to him that there may be a providence in his going there to live. But he may be sure of one thing—it did not all come about by chance. A man's life in this world is not ordered by chance.

It is quite true that money-getting carried our young friend, Mr. John Pushon, to the Hopewell neighborhood, but he must mix his religion with his business or he will lose his religion, and perhaps fail in his business. We hope so, at any rate, for nothing is plainer, as we read the Book of God and the book of human life, than that the more a man succeeds in this world, if at the expense of his religion, the worse it is for him. He who wins what men call prosperity on any other plan than God's plan wins ruin.

Now young Pushon's tastes incline him to keep his membership in the town Church, ten miles off. He has not yet "taken out his letter." If he will not "put it in" at Hopewell, he had better not. We have a young friend for whom life has a bright

and glorious future—unless he himself spoil and pervert his fine gifts and fair opportunities. But he “took his letter out” some years ago, carried it awhile, and then destroyed it. We fear for him. This violent sundering of the last tie that bound him to the fellowship of the Church is ominous. It appears to us as if a planet had left its orbit and were drifting. In its orbit is brightness and safety; out of it is darkness and danger.

But our young friend’s taste must not determine a question like this. There is a higher law than taste or sentiment. In the order of Providence he lives among the people of Hopewell, and not among the people of the town whom he likes so well—and it is his duty to God to help them. They need help, the help he can give. They already look up to him, and last fall changed the big road to accommodate him. Soon afterward he was called in to write a will for a neighbor. They would take him, young as he is, to be their Rex, Regulator, Can-ning man, if he would only be and do what he ought.

Of course he prefers to drive to town on Sunday morning behind his quick-stepping bays, and listen to the eloquent “stationed preacher.” We may remark, in passing, that it is a “tight squeeze” to run the little town on the “station” schedule, and making it a station nearly killed the circuit to which it used to belong. Perhaps, too, our friend likes to hear the organ and choir performance. But shall

likes, and preferences, and sentiments—dashed with a little carnal pride—settle a question like this?

We now call upon our friend, young Brother P'ushon, to consider, seriously and prayerfully, that he is there with the Hopewell people, and that they need him. He has money, education, system, energy, experience, and religion. If he does not use his gifts he will lose most, if not all, of his religion. In town he fills his pew at morning preaching and pays his quarterage, but he is too far off to be a working member. But he does work his horses harder than is becoming on Sunday when, in busy times, he drives to town in the morning and home in the evening. Of course he misses the Sunday-school and the Wednesday night prayer-meeting.

The town Church “needs him—but not much.” They can do without him. Hopewell needs him, and, as it seems, may die without him. And what a sad thing it is to see even a poor little Church like Hopewell die? It will die not alone.

One other thing we will tell our young friend, and we hope he will understand it and take it kindly. *He needs Hopewell.* This he may not know. He may deny that he has any such need, but he does need Hopewell nevertheless. Hopewell furnishes the best conditions for his true spiritual growth. If he turns away from the need of Hopewell he will never be—he can never be—the man he

ought to be—he might be. True and earnest work for Christ among Christ's poor at Hopewell will develop the Christly character in him as nothing else in this world will or can do.

When our young friend was a penitent—when deeply convicted of sin as well as for sin, he felt that he was vile as well as wicked—when he felt his feet sinking down in the mire of the horrible pit, then he promised God that he would do any thing for Christ that he might require of him. Will he keep his solemn vow? This is now about the first great duty that has been required of him. God gives him opportunity to use all his gifts and graces in building up Hopewell Church. Let him do it. Opportunities to do good never come by chance. God sends them. Every opportunity is a divine call. The house ready to tumble down, the scattered flock, the children going wild, the poor lambs hungry and bleating about the fold and no shepherd to care for and feed them—all these call him, as the man of Macedonia called Paul and Silas when they were asleep at Troas and waiting to know the will of God.

And in St. Paul's words do we press our exhortation upon our young friend: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

"Ye are the light of the world," said the Master. "A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither

do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick ; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Fearful is his guilt, awful is his responsibility who "digs in the earth and hides his Lord's money," and who, in the great day of account, can only say, "Lo, there thou hast that is thine!" Men talk of humility, modesty, and shrink away from their work, and plead "fear of the responsibility," and decline the task assigned them. Fear of responsibility, indeed! Well may they fear the responsibility of refusing to do what God commands, for it is heavy indeed.

What a beautiful, holy, and, therefore, happy life opens before our young friend if he is only wise enough to be led by the good Providence that has watched over and blessed him always. He may be as a "light shining in a dark place." What a privilege, what an honor, what a blessing, to reflect the light he has borrowed from Jesus!

Fame among men he may not win at Hopewell, but he will be known and honored among the good angels. As surely as God lives and takes account of the lives of men, for our young friend and for every one of us, the post of *duty*—not pleasure, nor riches, nor fame, nor honor, nor power—is the post of safety and true blessing for this world and

the world to come. Very beautiful is the legend, preserved by some old author, of the monk to whom there appeared, while at prayer in his cell, a glorious vision of our Saviour. In silent and adoring rapture he gazed upon the glorious presence. While he gazed the hour arrived at which it was his duty to feed the poor who came to the convent gate for their bread. The bell rang, calling the monk to his humble duty. How he longed to stay! But lingering not to enjoy the vision, he went his way to the lowly work of dividing bread among the poor beggars at the gate. When he returned he found the blessed vision still waiting for him. As he looked again he heard these words, "Hadst thou stayed I must have fled!"

And it is always so; the Saviour manifests himself to those who do the work he has given them to do, no matter how humble, how obscure it is. For Jesus does not measure our work after the manner of men. All work is great that he appoints; all duty holy that he enjoins.

As truly as beautifully does Schiller sing the praise of duty done:—

"What shall I do to be forever known?

Thy duty ever.

This did full many who yet slept unknown—

O, never, never!

Thinkest thou, perchance, that they remain unknown

Whom *thou* knowest not?

By angel trump in heaven their praise is blown,

Divine their lot.

“What shall I do to gain eternal life?
Discharge aright
The simple dues with which each day is rife?
Yea, with thy might.
Ere perfect scheme of action thou devise
Life will be fled,
While he who ever acts as conscience cries
Shall live though dead !”

CHAPTER VIII.

STOVES AS A MEANS OF GRACE.

THERE are many churches, particularly in the southern and western parts of our country, in the condition of Hopewell, so far, at least, as general discomfort is concerned. At its annual session, December, 1871, one of the oldest, strongest, and best organized Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, appointed a committee to investigate the condition of church buildings. We fear much that this Conference can make as good a showing as the average. Since the session referred to there has been some improvement in the general condition of church buildings in this Conference, but not enough to justify congratulations.

We copy the report of the committee, omitting only the names of the districts lest we give offense, numbering them instead.

“The Committee on Church Buildings beg leave to report:—

“There are in District No. 1, churches, 46; ceiled or plastered, 25; with stoves, 22. In District No. 2, churches, 53; ceiled or plastered, 34; with stoves, 19. In District No. 3, churches, 64; ceiled or plastered, 16; with stoves, 11. In District No. 4,

churches, 102; ceiled or plastered, 3; with stoves, 5. In District No. 5, churches, 45; ceiled or plastered, 13; with stoves, 12. In District No. 6, churches, 50; ceiled or plastered, 18; with stoves, 18. In District No. 7, churches, 65; ceiled or plastered, 7; with stoves, 8. In District No. 8, churches, 48; ceiled or plastered, 20; with stoves, 14. In District No. 9, churches, 64; ceiled or plastered, 24; with stoves, 31. In District No. 10, churches, 69; ceiled or plastered, 17; with stoves, 11. Total, churches, 606; ceiled or plastered, 177; with stoves, 151; without ceiling or plastering, 429; without stoves, 455."

We have here a fruitful text, but it would take a long while to expound and apply it. It contains history and prophecy, explaining many failures, and portending many more. We can only attempt, in this place, to indicate some of the main points, and to make, what the old divines used to call, "some improvements," by way of application.

Here are 606 churches, counting big and little. Some of them are very little; no churches at all, only preaching-places; often the neighborhood school-house. Of the 606 only 177 have ceiling or plastering: 429 of them are shells, only weather-boarded, or else logs, with cracks between of indefinite size and number. These 429 unceiled, unplastered shells, or log-pens, make out a "true bill" against us.

It is not a question of mere poverty; a great

many of these little frames, shells, and pens were built before the war. Many of them were found in rich neighborhoods. People who lived in fine houses were content to worship in log-pens. And even since the war, in many communities, these wretched apologies for churches are out of all relation to the comfort and ability of the people who live around them. We have gone to meeting with people who lived in fine houses, displayed silver on their tables, walked on carpets, and rode in carriages, to worship in a little twenty by thirty frame, or pen, with big cracks, loose floors, "punchoon" seats, and other appropriate accompaniments. There is no fancy in this picture—nothing but hard, cold fact. The memory of such places almost brings back the chills we had in trying to preach in them. We can give, by the dozen, names, places, and dates. On this subject we have been slow to learn and slower to reform. Such is the present state of facts. It is not creditable to our past history, or encouraging for our future prospects.

Of 606 churches, 429 were without ceiling or plastering, and 455 without stoves; 177 were ceiled or plastered, and 151 had stoves. A number of the ceiled or plastered houses are without stoves, so that we find a number, unceiled and unplastered, with stoves. In such a case the stove is, of course at a disadvantage.

What discomfort these figures reveal! O, brother

preacher, trying to preach with chattering teeth! O, shivering remnants of congregations, trying to hear such a preacher with cold toes, and blue noses, and chattering teeth also! let us all, preachers and hearers, join hands, and hearts, and voices, and pens, and *purses*, and remedy these things!

What are some of the results? In the first place, our Sunday-schools in nearly all country places break down inevitably soon after the first white-frost in October, and then go into torpor and semi-death, what we call "winter-quarters," till the flowers come again in the spring.

Here let us press what a great many do not seem rightly to apprehend—the great body of our southern and western people live in the country and in the small villages. Of large cities there are but few. Ours is a rural, agricultural population. We took the trouble once to look somewhat carefully into this matter. Taking the statistical reports of one Southern Conference for 1870 we found a total membership of 41,247. Now what proportion of these members belonged to what we call "stations," that is, charges that enjoy the weekly sermons and the exclusive pastoral services of their preacher? To the stations of this Conference there belonged, in 1870, 6,101 members, leaving 35,146 in the circuits. In another conference for that year we found a total membership of 22,657; of these 4,212 belonged to the stations, 18,445 to the circuits.

The circuits are made up of the country churches and the small villages. The great part of our population, as well as of our membership, live in the villages and in the country. Some persons, in their theories, plans, and law-making, seem to overlook these facts. In this they are not wise. We should, by all means, adapt our plans to the needs of the few large cities we have, but let us also remember who and what our people are, where and how they live.

These figures—in one conference 6,101 members in the stations and 35,146 in the circuits, in the other 4,212 in the stations and 18,445 in the circuits—will show how important is every thing that relates to the spiritual welfare of our people who live in the rural districts. For the great majority of them live there. Whatever, therefore, contributes to the efficiency of these wonderful “circuits” blesses the whole people, for it blesses the great majority of them; whatever hinders the circuit, hinders the whole Church. Now the great majority of the 455 Churches, mentioned above, that are without stoves, and of the 429 that are neither ceiled nor plastered, belong to the circuits. When we write, therefore, of stoves as a means of grace, we are considering a subject of at least very general importance. As a matter of course, with such unfurnished and uncomfortable churches the majority of our country Sunday-schools must, of necessity,

suspend during the winter months. How great is this evil, and how wide-spread!

A few years ago a dear little girl living somewhere in Arkansas wrote us a letter which only told what thousands of children might have written of hundreds of Churches. We give her letter entire, except the address, the signature, and a personal item:—

“Our Sunday-school closed a few weeks ago in consequence of the cold weather, and we are obliged to spend the Sabbath at home. How I wish we could always have Sunday-school! I like so much to go to Sunday-school and read my Testament. I like to study for the prizes offered by our superintendent, all of which are so nice. But I like most to learn something about our Saviour and his followers. But I will anxiously await the approach of spring, and the opening of our much-loved Sunday-school.

December 9, 1871.

And yet the people in her neighborhood did not freeze around their comfortable fires at home, and nothing went into winter-quarters but the Sunday-school and the Church; unless, indeed, we should add the snakes, bears, mud-turtles, and such like. Notably the devil went into no winter-quarters. His schools were kept open, and warm, and full. The ball-room, the drinking saloon, the gambling

den—these managed to keep themselves warm and crowded. Would that we could write words that would kindle fire enough to thaw some of these little country schools and Churches out of their annual torpor!

One great trouble results from the *habit* of suspending in October. It is plainly, with most of them, a chronic case. In most country churches nothing else is attempted or expected. The schools fade and die, and fall as regularly as the leaves do. Most people seem to think that it is equally a matter of course. We know some schools that have a formal meeting in October. They sing, speak, eat, sing and speak again, march and countermarch, and then adjourn to a day set somewhere about the first Sunday in the next April! They actually march into their winter graves with banners flying and to the sound of music! They call it the "fall picnic!" To us, it looks very like a funeral.

But really this is far better than another and more common plan—rather no plan—falling to pieces by degrees. If our schools will not, or cannot, go on through the entire winter, by all means let them adjourn in good order, with a pledge all round to meet as soon next February as the "hedge-hog, coming out of his hole, can see his shadow in the sun," or, at farthest, as soon as the buds begin to swell. But, at best, it is a sad business this packing up song-books, folding away

banners, breaking up classes for nearly six months in the year.

We have reason to believe that of something over 300,000 children reported in the Sunday-school statistics of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South—and we are persuaded our beloved Southern Baptist brethren are no better off—at least *one hundred and fifty thousand* are annually denied the benefit of Sunday-school instruction during the entire winter. This is a woeful state of things—the loss and damage we suffer are incalculable. We lose time, books, organization, *esprit*, opportunity, every thing that makes a Sunday-school good and useful. We ravel out like an unhemmed carpet; we rust out like polished steel exposed to salt water and all changes of weather. The trouble of organization has to be gone through with every spring; a month or two passes away before the machinery, rusted by exposure to winter rains, gets into working order. O, the loss of time, waste of power, neglect of opportunity—of opportunity that can come no more forever!

Last winter we passed a field where a fifteen-dollar plow was standing in the last furrow it made. There it had been standing for months. It was red with rust—the stock and handles black with mildew. The man's wagons were out in the yard; a M'Cor-mick reaper was divided, part in the yard, part in the field, and part under shelter; and his farm

under mortgage for the guano he had used to make cotton enough to pay for the tools and implements he bought last year! His smoke house was in Cincinnati, his corn crib in Chicago! The few hogs he had were in his garden; while his poor cows—their hair turned the wrong way in premonition of their death in the spring—were drawn up in a shivering group around a pile of straw that was rotting in the field! There were five dogs, and not a ram, ewe, wether, or lamb—black sheep or white sheep—in sight! And yet this man was a member of “Mount Hope Grange,” attended agricultural conventions, and talked about farming and co-operative industry!

How much wiser, thriftier are we with four hundred and twenty-nine churches in one Conference without ceiling or plaster, mere shells and log-pens, and many of them with only board covers—with four hundred and fifty-five churches without stoves?

What does it all mean? How in the world did we ever fall into such a style of doing things? And what are we going to do about it?

We hibernate, but the devil does not. What royal sport he has about Christmas, catching our young people who have neither preaching nor Sunday-school! Young blood does not go to sleep; and while their timid fathers are trying to keep warm at home, the young people are seeking entertainment abroad.

But there is no Sunday-school. One "monthly appointment" is "called in" during the transition of the Annual Conference, so that at least two months pass away—as we saw in the case of Hope-well Church in our last chapter—before circuit preaching comes again. If it should rain on the Sabbath of the first appointment, it frequently happens that three months pass away before the old log-house is opened, unless some good local preacher goes through the form of worship with a shivering skeleton of a congregation, the preacher too cold to preach, and the people too cold to hear. Thus it comes to pass that the whole machinery runs down. The Sunday-school goes first, the prayer-meeting soon follows, and preaching becomes a penance on cold Sundays, if it is attempted at all.

These uncomfortable churches are responsible for many things besides the death of hundreds of Sunday-schools, and what a "slaughter of the innocents" this is!

This state of things touches the finances of the preachers most materially. The people do not go to Church, the steward does not see them, and the preacher does not get his money. We remember one Quarterly Conference—we could easily give names—in a certain circuit in Georgia, in 1869. There were seven or eight churches, most of them stoveless and cheerless as could be. There was one little church that was thoroughly comfortable. It

was plastered around and ceiled above. They had a good stove, and the fire was kindled every Sunday morning with dry wood kept for the purpose. They had never gone into winter-quarters—congregation and Sunday-school running a steady schedule all the year round. That Church came within a few dollars of paying its whole assessment for the year at the first Quarterly Conference, held in February. It paid twice as much as all the rest put together.

After comparing a great many facts we found the following to be a general rule: The more comfortable the house, the better the pay during the winter months; the meaner the house the smaller the pay. And this does not depend on the matter of comparative ability. But churches that are frozen all winter never pay much till another summer thaws them out, and another crop brings relief.

In the North and North-west the winter is the revival season. It is a time of abundant leisure, and the severity of the climate has compelled the people to provide against it. In Maine and Minnesota they make their churches comfortable enough in the depth of winter—even with snow piled up to the window-sills—for profitable protracted and revival meetings. They have found out the value of comfortable churches. Unfortunately, perhaps, our Southern winters are not rigorous enough to compel us to make adequate provisions for them, but too cold to be comfortable without fire.

A winter revival in a Southern country church would be a phenomenon. We remember one instance in the mountain region of Cherokee, Georgia. It was a quarterly meeting occasion at one of those wretched little log-houses, with a big door at one end and a big fire-place at the other, the door generally open and the fire-place generally fireless. It was in March and unusually balmy for the season. On Saturday night three persons presented themselves for prayer, and one of them professed conversion. Next morning, lying awake with our eyes shut, in the "big room" of our host, while the brethren who spent the night with us were talking around the fire, a brother began to comment on the meeting of the night before. We were trying to make out our plan of the morning sermon, but one remark of the brother effectually broke up our sermonizing. He spoke of the three persons who went forward for prayer, and particularly of the one who professed conversion. It had surprised him much, and he told more than he knew of "Salem's" history in his comment: "Well, I never did see any body converted this time of the year before!" The period between "laying-by" and "fodder-pulling time" was, in his opinion, the true canonical revival season. He really seemed to doubt whether the person who had "professed" was truly converted—was it not the wrong time of the year?

How much bad preaching has been done because

the preacher's toes were cold, his hands were cold, his whole body cold, his mind benumbed, and his poor heart cold too! How much bad hearing for the same reasons! And how could preacher or congregation keep warm, when a dozen big cracks let in the whistling west wind, or the blighting east wind? Cracks in the floor, cracks in the weatherboarding, cracks in the roof, cracks in the sermon, cracks every-where! We saw a church in January, 1875, that had over forty panes of glass out of its windows, and yet the people—the unreasonable people—complained of being cold!

Is this evil to go on forever? Shall we hand down to our children what is, perhaps, the worst legacy our Methodist fathers—of blessed memory—left to us; wretched shells and pens instead of churches, and, what is worse, a state of chronic contentment therewith?

Now, we ask in all soberness, is this sort of annual hibernation, with perhaps three fourths of our country membership, to become the settled policy of our Church? Then let us provide for it by statute, and “put it in the Discipline.” Is it really a Wesleyan or an Asburian feature?

Are we never to learn that what a few hundred country churches have done, all our country churches can do—provide comfortable houses, and keep up Sunday-schools, and prayer-meetings, and profitable preaching perpetually? We can make

our churches comfortable. Some have done it; all can, if they will.

We will agree to debate with any man who will deny the following propositions:—1. Wood placed in a stove and set on fire in a country church will generate heat as certainly as in a town church. 2. We can make a log-church warm as easily as we can make a log-dwelling warm. If, after full and fair argument and experiment, we fail to convince or silence him, we will agree to give him up—to hibernation.

We rejoice to hear of fine churches erected in the cities—provided our people do not go over their ears and eyes in debt for them. We are not afraid that too many will be built. But just now we would rather hear of a great number of well-planned, well-built, well-furnished churches dedicated in the country. Our brethren in the country are able to provide themselves with comfortable churches. Let the reform begin. And let them begin in time. A prudent man gets ready for winter before winter comes. The example of the man who would not patch his broken roof “in fair weather because then it didn’t leak, nor in bad weather because he wouldn’t work in the rain to patch any body’s roof, even his own,” is not to be commended for its far-sightedness.

If Hopewell, or Speedwell—and this last was the very *pokiest* church we ever knew—has a good house that only needs a stove, let them buy a stove.

If the house is only a hull, plaster or ceil it. If it is only a log-house, and they can do no better, God will accept the log-house and bless the people when they worship in it, *if they "chink the cracks," and make it warm enough for their children to study God's word in!* But will he accept a house with huge spaces between the logs, that lets in the cold to drive out his children? We trow not.

One thing more we say at this place, and the fact we commend to the meditations of all concerned: it is not the fault of the children that our Sunday-schools are broken up during the winter.

O for some country Haggai, with the true fire of a reformer and the true spirit of temple-building in him, to rise up in our midst and preach to us "repentance;" repentance for our *thousands* of bleak and cheerless "meeting-houses," for our suspended Sunday-schools, broken-down prayer-meetings, our scattered congregations, and our poorly paid preachers! How pitiable would be our condition if we could do no better! how guilty our negligence, and indifference, and indolence, and stinginess when we can do better—when we can make the house of God as comfortable at least as we have made our own!

We have been going on in this bad way for nearly two generations. Do we intend to go on in this way forever?

CHAPTER IX.

BUILDING DIKES.

OUR last chapter was on building comfortable churches; we come now to speak of a different, but altogether indispensable, work to be done—we must *build dikes*.

The wise Hollanders built immense sea-walls to prevent the overflow of lands reclaimed from the ocean. Much of the fairest and most fertile of this rich and populous State is “reclaimed land.” Long and hard was the fight with the sea, but labor and patience have had their reward. It is really a wonderful story—the dikes of Holland, their builders, and their uses. But it can only be sketched in meager outline here. We borrow the language of a writer in Appleton’s Cyclopaedia:—

“In Holland are the most remarkable dikes in the world. Their immense importance may be appreciated from the fact that a single inundation from the sea in the year 1277 caused the destruction of forty-four villages; and in 1287, only ten years afterward, eighty thousand persons were destroyed by another, and its present shape and extent were given to the Zuyder Zee. In the fifteenth century about one hundred thousand persons

were destroyed through the imperfection of the dikes, when their construction was undertaken in the most thorough manner, and a law was enacted enforcing their being kept in order. At present this work is conducted on a systematic plan, and at great cost. Embankments are made toward the sea with heavy timbers filled in with stone, and the surface is covered with bundles of flags and reeds fastened down by stakes. Piles also are driven into the sand, and protected by planking as well as by earth, turf, and stones.

“These artificial dikes are often forty feet above ordinary high water, and wide enough at the top for a common roadway. Frequently the slopes are covered with wicker work, made of willow twigs, and the willow tree is extensively cultivated to furnish these supplies, which require frequent removal, as also to bind together by its roots the loose sands. Walls of masonry are built in some of the most exposed situations, and rows of piles outside protect the dikes from the action of the waves.

“It is estimated that the annual expense of keeping up the dike of Helder and that of West Cappel, at the western extremity of the Island of Walcheren, is about \$30,000 each. The whole expenditure in Holland for maintaining its dikes and regulating its water levels is annually from \$2,000,000 to \$2,500,000. Engineers are constantly employed and every provision is made of materials that may

be required for constant repairs. Watchmen are employed during the winter months to patrol the dikes by day and by night, and give alarm whenever the danger appears imminent, and the tide threatens to overflow. The people then hasten to the point, and by mats of straw and rushes, and large sheets of sail-cloth buried in the sand, they raise a temporary bulwark, to be more securely built before the approach of the next tide."

Now, as it seems to us, we live in a time and in a country where broadly-laid and strongly-built dikes must be raised to prevent overflow of the fair inheritance our fathers, by the grace of God, reclaimed from the sea and handed down to us. Whatever is good in our civilization is so much, by God's blessing, reclaimed from the sea of this world's corruption.

We have no sympathy with croakers and whiners. We do by no means believe that the world has seen its best days—its true "golden age" is before us, not behind us. We do not believe the Church used to be better than she is now. On the contrary, the world, as we truly believe, is better than it ever was. And the Church, we make no question, is also better than she ever was. There were never so many people reading God's word and trying to obey it; there were never so many recognizing God's government and endeavoring to live according to its statutes; there were never so many praying; there

were never so many true lovers of our Lord Jesus Christ; there were never so many trying to extend his blessed kingdom to the uttermost parts of the earth.

But evil is also strong and wide-spread. The "devil is loosed," the "powers of darkness" have developed an intenser activity than at any former period. The enemies of our Lord and his Church are more bitter and relentless, as well as more active and capable, than ever before. True, the Church is far more able to meet and withstand these attacks than at any former period. But the Church should indulge no dreams of millennial peace. "By day and by night" her watchmen should "patrol" her dikes that they may give the alarm whenever the sea threatens to break in upon us. If we will only listen we can always hear its sullen roar, for it is close by.

It is no part of the plan of this little volume to write a long indictment of the times in which we live. But some dangers are so imminent that the most inexperienced eye may detect them, and so great that the humblest of us all may well lift up his voice to swell the cry of alarm.

First we may mention the intense materialism, tending fast to downright atheism, that has so largely taken possession of the teachers of natural science in our time. This evil spirit having once been cast out of science, has "walked to and fro" in the earth "seeking dry places," and finding none,

has returned to his old lodging. "Finding it empty, swept, and garnished," he has entered into it again, and the "last state" of its victim "is worse than the first."

The names of the leaders of this new crusade against Christianity—for that is what this materialism means, hatred of Christ and his Church—we need not name here. But their pernicious doctrines are filtering down to the most unlettered of the people. Reviews, magazines, newspapers, pamphlets, lectures, and even text-books, are spreading far and wide, to the very best of their ability, the chilling and blighting skepticism of their first propounders and apostles.

The wonderful material progress of our country has brought many evils in its train. It has developed an all-devouring worldliness that corrupts society. It has brought into being a hundred essentially false notions of life—its true end and true blessedness. It has brought luxury and corruption.

The influx of several millions of foreigners, with little sympathy with our people or their institutions, in some cases speaking a different language and professing a different faith, or repudiating all faith, has brought an evil and disintegrating element into the very heart of our civilization.

Rome—learning nothing that is good and forgetting nothing that is bad—is planning for new conquest in our western republic. Baffled in Europe,

she reappears in this country, to preach salvation by sacraments to all who will bow down before her, and damnation by priestly malediction to all who will be free in Christ Jesus. Priests, bishops, archbishops, and cardinals—nuns, and monks, and Jesuits—they are all here. And they have brought with them every folly that Rome ever invented, and every form of spiritual tyranny she ever devised. Unchanged in her badness, unblushing in the memory of her shameful history, and only lacking opportunity to employ the old and bloody implements of persecution—the sword, the fagot, the wheel, the stake, and the whole enginery of the horrible Inquisition—the papacy seeks new empires in America. God be praised! The pope cannot now convert us by force of inquisitional machinery, nor burn us if we refuse to kneel.

If any good souls delude themselves with the notion that Rome has been purged of her ignorance, her superstition, her cruelty, let him consider how her priests hounded on the multitude that murdered Stevens in Mexico, and let him contemplate the poor body of Guibord—six years unburied—laid in the grave at last under military protection—Romish priests of high degree threatening to curse the ground where he sleeps with “bell, book, and candle,” because while he lived he dared to read books that their intolerant hierarchy in Rome had condemned.

In some parts of our country monstrous social heresies find advocates and disciples. False notions of the relation of the sexes, with loose and unscriptural divorce laws, are among the graver evils that threaten our purity and peace. And in the same category should we place that monstrous abortion, falsely called "spiritualism," that is neither science, nor philosophy, nor religion, but the scandal of each and the shame of our generation.

But one of the most notable of all the evils and corrupting influences that characterize this age is the multiplication of bad books, and the ever widening circulation of bad newspapers. The press is stronger than Hercules, has more hands than Briareus, and when it fairly sets itself to do wickedness can be as unclean as the Harpies.

We have no inclination to denounce the press of our country—we would not, we do not, bring wholesale and indiscriminate accusations against its conductors. The multiplication of good books makes us glad; in the growing influence of those among the newspapers of our country that love truth and defend it we rejoice. There were never so many good books printed and circulated; there were never so many newspapers worthy of praise and confidence. But, on the other hand, there were never so many bad books, never so many depraved newspapers. Books are sent out every month from respectable publishing houses that are not fit to be

read by a pure man or a chaste woman. Hundreds of influential papers are unfit to be read in the family circle. There are absolutely millions of copies of cheap and very bad novels, and millions of illustrated journals of crime, in constant circulation. They are every-where—at hotels, in reading-rooms, in the cars, in steamboats, at news stands, on the streets, and in the houses of the people. They are printed by the million and sold and read. And the busy printer can hardly keep up with the demand.

They are as troublesome and as loathsome as the plague of frogs that swarmed out of the Nile and came up into the houses of the Egyptians—cold, and slimy, and ugly—sparing neither prince, nor priest, nor slave. Would God some Moses and Aaron would come to drive them back to the ooze and mud where they were born!

Many of the great dailies—we write it with profound sorrow—have done what they could to make these vile publications respectable by imitating their example and filling their columns with the sickening details of crime. How for six mortal months, in the year of grace 1875, they flooded our homes with the revolting nastiness of a scandal suit in Brooklyn! Shame upon them for the part they took in that shameful affair! And the lesser dailies follow in their wake, to the best of their ability. Crime is paraded in all its revolting details, and we

charge it upon them that their managers do not even design to do good by their minute description of the most shameful and abominable sins.

No; they give publicity to crime and shame to sell their papers. And it does sell them. Alas! that there are so many people who have such tastes! Shame on those who call themselves "men of letters," who aspire to conduct public journalism, and who, for the sake of money, pander to these low and debauched tastes! It is a crime against civilization and religion. And the more pretentious the paper that pursues such a course the greater the crime.

We go one step farther: all the good men and women in the country should unite to put down the corrupt and to put up the purest of our newspapers. They can do both most effectually, and in a lawful and proper manner. Let us cease, once and for all, to subscribe for papers that teach infidelity and pander to licentiousness, and patronize only those that defend the truth and foster purity. *This will be effectual.*

November 26, 1875, we read this statement, made, it is said, by one who knows: "A daily paper conducted on Christian principles would not pay expenses." This we do not believe. But if it is so we have no difficulty in the answer: it is better to have no daily papers than to have bad ones.

The bad books, the low novels, the vile illustrated

journals of crime, and the dailies that respond to the same inspiration, all taken together, make up what one has termed "Satanic Literature," and another "The Literature of Sodom." And the designations, the descriptions, are just.

Some of our readers may, perhaps, think that we are unnecessarily alarmed on this subject. However this may be, we are quite sure that many persons are not alarmed who ought to be.

We may profitably quote on this point part of an article written by the Rev. E. A. Rand, and published in 1873 in the "Christian Banner." His figures were taken from official sources—from the records, as we remember, of the court before which certain arrested parties were tried. Mr. Rand says:—

"The accumulation of immoral literature in our cities is immense. Anthony Comstock, of New York, has been specially conspicuous for his crusade against it. He reported, at one date, having seized one hundred and eighty thousand impure and obscene pictures and photographs; five tons of impure and obscene books and pamphlets; more than two tons of letter-press in sheets; more than twenty thousand sheets of impure songs, catalogues, circulars, and hand-bills; obscene transparent playing cards, five thousand five hundred to six thousand; *letters from all parts of the country, ordering these books, etc., over seventy-five thousand.* The seizures included other Sodom agencies than lit-

erature, and covered from six to twelve months' time.

"A later report of Mr. Comstock mentions fifteen thousand letters of orders to dealers and publishers of these wares, coming from pupils of both sexes in our schools. The fact has come out that there are circulating libraries in schools, the librarian receiving compensation from the bookseller, and for ten cents pupils can read any one of one hundred and forty-four volumes of Sodom literature, published in New York. . . . In the discussion of this subject it has come out that over six thousand people earn their daily bread in this traffic of hell by scattering every-where these books, illustrations, and agencies of Sodom. One dealer was arrested, and on opening his books twenty orders were found from the librarian of a prominent Western school. [Parents would like to know the names of schools where such abominations exist.]

"The whole subject forces upon us some very unpleasant inferences. The booths of Sodom would not keep such wares if the homes of Sodom did not demand them. The publishers of immoral literature in the United States know that in depraved human nature there is a craving for what they send out. We are getting down to the dark, sad fountains of evil. It is not enough to bring out the battering-ram of the law against the publishers and the sellers; *the people who buy need talking to.* The

generation that is growing up needs our warnings and instructions. And these instructions cover a good deal of ground. They are not to touch the subject of purity in general and stop there.

"We know this is not a very agreeable subject. The Dead Sea is not so winning as the slopes of Carmel. Prayer is a far more beautiful subject to talk about than impurity, but the subject cannot be ignored any longer with safety."

It is truly time to speak out on this subject. "A broadside of Sinaitic thunder" should be turned loose upon these ramparts and legions of darkness.

One thing we will make bold to say right here: if the government cannot keep obscene publications out of its mails, it is weak; if it will not, it is bad.

The quantity of obscene publications that go through the mails is not suspected by one in a hundred. Their publication is a crime against domestic and social purity, against civil liberty and Christian civilization, whose enormity is immeasurable.

They are conceived in sin and brought forth in iniquity. Their fruit is death. All concerned in the shameful business are guilty before man and God. Those who write them, or things like them, for the secular press, are a disgrace to the profession of letters. They are the enemies of the human race. Those who publish, advertise, and sell them—shall we not say also, who read them?—are aiders and abettors in the fearful crimes suggested by them

that shock into daily agonies what conscience is left in the public mind.

Glory and honor to Anthony Comstock, the brave young clerk who, in New York, has bearded this hydra-headed beast in his den! He has deserved well of his country.

Men talk of liberty when they mean license. Liberty of the press that allows bad men to debauch and destroy society is a shame and a curse. We cannot bring ourselves to the conclusion that government is designed only for the protection of criminals. The loyal and the virtuous surely have some rights that government is bound to respect and vindicate. They pay by far the largest proportion of the taxes to support the government, and we take leave to say that a government that allows the immense machinery of its postal service to be subsidized by the publishers and venders of obscene literature betrays its trust, and is false to its best friends and truest supporters.

Liberty of the press! liberty of conscience, indeed! What these people wish is license to debauch. They know nothing, care nothing, about liberty, because they know nothing and care nothing for truth and purity.

It is time, indeed, to speak out on this subject. Pure literature, as well as pure religion, is concerned in this matter. Every scholar and man of culture should speak and denounce this colossal and poi

tentous evil. Preachers of the Gospel should warn the people of the danger. The religious press of the country should speak out, and in no uncertain tones. The religious press *can, if it will* so stir the hearts of the people on this subject that our rulers will be glad enough to mend their ways; and railroad and steamboat managers will cease to allow the peddling of obscene wares in every car and in every boat that carries passengers.

The fathers and mothers of the country should take this matter in hand. Vain the sacred culture of pure and religious homes if the streams of pollution flow through their nurseries. No amount of watchfulness can keep bad books, lewd prints, and corrupt papers out of the hands of our children while the government continues to be their common carrier and colporteur.* It would be as easy to justify the government in scattering small-pox pustules through its mail-bags because some villain might be found who would pay the postage, and to claim that he lives in a free country!

The friends of true education should join the friends of true religion in this protest. What can the most competent and faithful instructor do when his pupils occupy the recess, or the night at home,

* After this chapter was written a twelve-year-old son of the writer of this book received, through the post-office, a specimen number of a paper we would not knowingly allow to come into our house. How do the publishers of these things procure the names and post-offices of even little children?

in gloating over obscene pictures, and in devouring, with ever-increasing voracity, licentious stories? How can such minds be trained to healthy action, or stored with useful information? Under such circumstances education is impossible.

We are profoundly sorry to believe that but few of our secular papers can be relied on to do good service in bringing government to do its duty in this matter. A few—truth, perhaps, requires us to say many—of our secular papers are the organs of this literature of Sodom; some of them care nothing about it so they have good subscription lists and paying advertisements; some of them are really unfriendly to Christianity; others, that have right views on the subject, are afraid to speak the truth; but there are others that believe the truth and dare affirm it. The country looks to them, and demands of them, as the best service they can render society, that they join all good men and women in protecting our children against this “pestilence that walketh in darkness,” this “destruction that wasteth at noonday.”

But, we are told, Congress has passed a law on this subject. Then let it be enforced, without waiting till some devoted man, like Anthony Comstock, risks his life in making up a case. If we have no laws that can protect us, let us make them; if the fault be in our law-makers, let us have others.

Now, in relation to this whole matter, there is a

very great and needful work for our Sunday-schools to do. As we have seen, there are in the United States 69,871 Sunday-schools, with 753,060 officers and teachers and 5,790,683 scholars. Here is power to reform and to save a whole nation, if we know how to use it; here is boundless hope, if we know how to work with God in bringing up this army of children and young people to understand, and believe, and love, and do the truth. Here are the true dike-builders; they can build broad and high the strong sea-walls that shall beat back the devouring waves.

It should be our prayerful study and labor to preoccupy these young minds and hearts with the knowledge and love of the truth. In God's truth must we lay the foundations of the only dikes that can withstand the sea.

If we would save our children from the gross materialism in heart and life that is sure to follow the present rage of speculative materialism in science; if we would save them from the sordid worldliness that seems to be tightening its grasp upon the hearts of our people; if we would save them from false opinions and corrupt practices; if we would save them from the blight and curse of licentious literature—then we must preoccupy their thoughts and their love with the truth. And the truth they need and must have—if they are saved from these evils—is in God's word and nowhere else. There is,

we are sure, no other adequate remedy. How sacred, then, is the office of teacher of God's blessed word!

In this whole most needful work of dike-building there is much that should be done through our Sunday-school libraries. Only consider the thousands and tens of thousands of books that are annually published and sold for the use of Sunday-schools. Through these books wonders of prevention and cure may be wrought if we are only wise to "know our danger and our remedy." There was never so much talent employed in the production of Sunday-school literature; never so much money expended in its circulation.

No doubt there has been great improvement. For the progress that has been made we "thank God and take courage." But much remains to be done; there "remaineth yet very much land to be possessed." Our children's books and papers ought to be better than they are; they ought to exercise tenfold the influence they do.

We cannot discuss the subject as it deserves in these concluding pages. But some things may, at least, be suggested.

Are not our Sunday-schools books too largely simply "story-books?" Perhaps nine tenths of those that have the largest sale are merely stories. Some of them are very good, some of them are very bad; many of them are simply innocuous. We must venture to say that, in our humble opinion,

the universal novel-reading mania of the present period is largely attributable to the story-books that fill the shelves of our Sunday-school libraries. When novel reading becomes a mania there is not much wisdom or taste in the choice of books. Persons under this spell are like certain omnivorous animals, they devour whatever comes to hand, choosing, however, if they choose at all, those books that shock their feelings most.

We have no fanatical notions on the subject of novel reading. Some novels are good and useful. They ought to be read. But where people will read nothing else it augurs badly for their true culture, character, and usefulness. Are not our young people losing, very largely, their taste for solid reading? The circulating libraries show that novels are in far greater demand than any other class of books, and by precisely those people who, most of all, have need to read better books.

We propose, for our part, a general overhauling of the prevailing theories as to what books are appropriate for Sunday-school libraries. We would enlarge their range, retaining, of course, all the best of what are generally and properly known as religious books. Such books, we suppose, should predominate. But we would have done with that notion that limits our selection of Sunday-school libraries to works on religion. We seem, hitherto, to have proceeded on the idea that we must only

buy books suitable for Sunday reading, as if the children had only Sunday for their reading. Surely we have erred on this point. There are six other days in which they may redeem, from study or labor, a few hours at least for the reading of good books. If we had our way we would revolutionize the entire theory and practice of our schools on this subject.

We would have religious books most certainly, and the best of them. We would also introduce, to the extent of our means to buy them, and the needs of each particular school, standard works in other departments. We would introduce the great poets and historians. Milton, Young, Shakspeare, to mention only three, ought to be in our Sunday-school libraries. So ought Macaulay, Prescott, Irving, and such other princes among historians and essayists. There should be books of travel and discovery. Our libraries should be rich in biography. Here we would have the lives of the great leaders of men, civil and military, as well as religious. And why not? Whatever great and useful books young people ought to read, we judge to be suitable for Sunday-school libraries. Then they would be worth something; then our young people would form a taste—a habit, we might say—for reading good standard books. Once form such a habit and they never will—they never can—take pleasure in trash or obscenity afterward.

Three fourths of the goody story-books—full of “gush” and “bosh” and unnatural sentimentalism—we would inexorably rule out. For our part—and we say it boldly and unhesitatingly—we would greatly prefer to see our own children reading Macaulay, or Prescott, or Motley, or some other standard and pure writer, on Sunday evening itself, than to see them running through, to see how the story winds out—volume after volume of very thin, very shallow, very “goody” little books of the nowadays approved Sunday-school libraries. Of course, for their Sunday reading, we are not shut up to these alternatives; but if it were so, we would not hesitate one moment to decide against the last-mentioned books.

Besides, as we have said, they have six weekdays. Let us give them something to read that is worth reading.

We press the view the more earnestly, because, as we know, the great mass of our people have comparatively few books of any kind. This is, perhaps, peculiarly true in the South and West. We are no slanderers of our people, but we must tell the truth; they are not, in any broad sense, a reading people.

Now, outside of a very few of our cities, there is nothing that deserves the name of a circulating library. But wherever there is a Sunday-school there may be, and, as we think, ought to be, a small

circulating library—not only for little children, but for intelligent young people, for teachers, for parents, and for the adult members of the Church and congregation. Never fear about the money. If we will only make a wise use of it and buy books that will make people wiser and better—books they need—books for week-days as well as Sunday afternoon—they will furnish the money.

We would regret to give offense in this expression of very carefully formed opinions about our Sunday-school libraries. Our thoughts have long been drawn this way. We have considered it from the stand-point of Sunday-school librarian and teacher; we have looked into it from the stand-point of pastor and parent. For over five years it was almost part of our official duty to consider this subject in its various bearings. We are deeply conscientious in what we have written, and intend, providence permitting, to “fight it out on this line,” unless we shall be brought to see our error. And we declare ourself open to conviction—willing to be convinced and ready to be reproved.

In concluding this chapter, we repeat that much can be and should be done by our Sunday-school libraries in “building dikes” to “prevent the overflow of lands reclaimed from the sea.” This work must be largely done by preoccupying the minds and hearts of children with the truth. And, as we suppose, much can be done by giving them such

books as will elevate their conceptions, refine their tastes, and fix in them such habits of thought and sentiment as will forever protect them against the dangers from corrupt and corrupting literature, that threaten every one of our homes, discredit our civilization, and corrupt our society.

CHAPTER X.

HINTS ON SUNDAY-SCHOOL WORK.

OUR chapters have so grown and multiplied, as we have written, that there is now no room for discussing, as one might wish to do, several important practical questions connected with the general subject of Sunday-school work, without making this volume much larger than the design of its publication would justify. Perhaps it is better that it should be so. If the general principles we have set forth—how imperfectly and unsatisfactorily we understand and feel—shall be accepted only in part, we are more than content. We have far more faith in ideas than formulas; in principles than in recipes.

We venture, however, in this concluding chapter to group, as seems most convenient, a few general ideas—*hints*, if our readers please—which those who desire may expand as much as they wish; and which may, perhaps, be suggestive of far abler discussions of the subject than we could hope to make, had we opportunity to make the attempt.

Nor are we careful to reduce these hints and suggestions to any rigid order of arrangement.

I. *The Model Superintendent*.—Some writer, whose name we do not know, says pithily and wisely:

“The chief officer of a Sunday-school should be a man too brave to be over-sensitive, too pious to notice little sources of irritation, too manly frequently to threaten resignation, too loving to let people remain cold to him, too strong to be disturbed by trifles, and so firm in nerves as not to be classed with the sensitive ones.

2. *A Christian Education*.—Dr. Arnold, of Rugby, says: “To give a man a truly Christian education, is to make him love God as well as to know him; to make him have faith in Christ, as well as to have been taught the facts that he died for our sins and rose again; to make him open his heart eagerly to every impulse of the Holy Spirit, as well as to have been taught the fact, as it is in the Nicene Creed, that he is the Lord and Giver of life.”

3. *Brilliant but Useless*.—Many superintendents and teachers, and preachers as well, may lay to heart, with great profit to themselves and their charges, the following story:—

“Sir Astley Cooper, on visiting Paris, was asked by the surgeon *en chef* of the empire how many times he had performed a certain very difficult operation. Sir Astley answered that he had performed the operation but thirteen times.

“‘Ah, but, Monsieur,’ said the Frenchman, ‘I have done him one hundred and sixty times.’

“Sir Astley was amazed. The curious Frenchman, looking at the Englishman’s blank face, asked,

“‘And how many times did you save his life?’

“Very modestly the great surgeon answered, ‘I saved eleven out of the thirteen.’

It was his turn to question, ‘And how many did you save out of the one hundred and sixty times?’

“‘Ah, Monsieur,’ replied the Frenchman, ‘I lose dem all, but de operation was very brilliant.’”

4. *Amateur Theology*.—A few years ago, a writer in “Blackwood’s Magazine” gave us a trenchant paper on the readiness with which people who have no fitness for the work rush into the field of theological discussion. Would that we had space to reproduce it!

When an over-confident person comes across something that is *new to him*, it is easy, perhaps natural, for him to conclude that he is a discoverer. If the world does not agree with him, it is so much the worse for the world; if his opinion is contrary to the facts, it is so much the worse for the facts. The disposition to go smashing about among received opinions is not confined to people who write; talkers do the same thing. Few qualities are required for a full equipment for such a crusade against “authorities”—ignorance, audacity, and flippancy are quite sufficient.

A few preachers—alas! for their congregations—are given to this practice. The way they play “shuttle-cock” with the venerable names of Calvin, Arminius, Wesley, Edwards, Watson, and others of

“the Fathers,” both ancient and modern, would be fearful if it were not a farce. It seems tolerably clear to us, that every man is not called on to be the discoverer of a new world, or the expounder of a new doctrine. Nor is it every man’s mission to destroy what he does not understand.

We received a letter once from a very young man, unfortunately, for all concerned, a teacher of a Bible-class. Poor man! poor class! he was neither learned in the Scriptures nor experienced in grace. He was not himself converted—he himself was a stranger to Christ! And yet somebody, assuming an awful responsibility, “gave him a class!” He wanted us to send him books from which he could expound the first chapter of Genesis, in its relations to modern science, and overturn Darwinism! Others of his class have a strange penchant for trying to teach the eighth and ninth chapters of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans!

5. *The Argufying Man.*—The last paragraph suggests a word or two about the man who has broken up many a Sunday-school, and destroyed the peace of many Churches—the argufying man. The “London Globe” once drew his picture to the life:—

“What renders it so difficult to put up with the argufying man is the circumstance that he never contends for truth, but for triumph. This is plain enough from the dishonest and uncandid way in which he goes to work. He will grant nothing;

never confesses to the most palpable hit, though you have bent your foil against his pad half-a-dozen times in as many minutes; and he never knows when to stop. He is not satisfied with an imaginary victory.

“Whenever he thinks you are down because you are silent, he gives you a sort of verbal kick, to rouse you for another combat. Loyola was a simpleton to him in casuistry. He has the trick of escape possessed by that fish which can hide from his enemies by exuding a preparation that renders the water around him dark and obscure. Without having any specific acquaintance with a topic, which may be in your line or bent to understand, he is still ready to contradict a doctor in medicine, or a composer in counterpoint. Fly him, if you can at all with convenience.”

6. *The Frivolous Teacher*.—Next to the “argufying man,” a frivolous teacher is perhaps the most injurious person, or pest, who can manage to get into a Sunday-school. We knew a frivolous man-teacher once who nearly paralyzed a school for a whole year. Talmage gives us the following sketch of a frivolous woman-teacher: “She sits down before her class; she is not in earnest; she has no appreciation of the great work for which she is called. She thinks that it is a great thing to be a Sunday-school teacher. She comes in and says to the class, ‘Fine day!’ Then she arranges her apparel; then she gives an

extra twist to the curl, and looks at the apparel of the children in the class."

7. *Unconverted Persons as Teachers.*—We have about come to the conclusion that there are some questions which have unanswerable arguments on both sides. Perhaps this is one of them. Such matters must be *managed*. The pastor and superintendent—and if they are not on good enough terms to advise together one or both of them ought to resign—can determine in each case. To say that nobody who has not the full assurance of conversion should teach, would be to say too much. To give a class to just any converted person who has a whim to teach would be very unwise. We know some converted people who are not fit to teach: we know some thoughtful, devout persons, not yet converted, but waiting upon God, as did the Roman Cornelius, who have been very useful as Sunday-school teachers. But no frivolous man or woman, who can make puns on sacred words, who can sit up and stare around during prayers, whose influence cannot be good, ought ever to be intrusted with young and impressible souls.

8. *The Pastor's Relation.*—They have been "argu-fying" about the pastor's relation to the school for a long time. To us it has always seemed to be a very plain thing—the pastor is the pastor. He is pastor of the Sunday-school for the same reason that he is pastor of the Church. Who ever heard of a

shepherd who was shepherd of the sheep but not of the lambs? The duties of superintendent and pastor cannot be marked out like the rounds of a sentry—thus far, and no farther. Where two right-minded men are thrown together in the management of a Sunday-school they will understand each other and help each other. When they do not, one or both of them deserve censure. Where both parties have the right spirit there will be no disturbance. Where there is continual difficulty between the pastor and the superintendent, and an ever-widening breach between the Church and the Sunday-school, *somebody ought to resign, or be moved.*

9. *Teaching the Wrong Thing.*—The average life of a Sunday-school generation is short—four or five years at most. The children who are now in our schools will soon cease to be children. We have an opportunity now for teaching them the things they need to know; the truths that may make them wise unto salvation. This opportunity will come no more; let us improve it.

The following little story has “a moral:” In Mr. Dales’s magazine there is a good story told of a dignitary of the Church of England who, happening to be in London, went to hear the Dean of Westminster at the Abbey. “How did you like the sermon?” asked the lady with whom he was staying. “O,” was the reply, “it was very good. There was nothing to object to in it; but it was not what I

went to hear. I went to hear about the way to heaven, and I only heard about the way to Palestine."

10. *Leave Something to the Imagination.*—Some people overdo their explanations. They define and explain, and explain and define, till all is lost in a sea of words. Some illustrate and illustrate, with fact, and story, and fancy sketch, till the poor bewildered child forgets what it is that is being illustrated. Charles Lamb gives some advice about making speeches that teachers in Sunday-schools may consider profitably. Perhaps, like the Indian's tree, he was so straight he leaned over a little the other way. He says that a speaker should not attempt to express too much, but should leave something to the imagination of his hearers. He illustrates his meaning by telling how he did on one occasion when he was called on to respond to a toast to his health. He rose, bowed to the audience, put his hand upon his heart and said, "Gentlemen," and then took his seat, leaving it to their imagination to supply the rest.

11. *Plodding Teachers.*—Would that there were more such plodders in our schools as the one spoken of by the "Sunday-School Times" in the following extract:—

"Said a superintendent of one of his teachers who had filled her place faithfully for years, but was one of the slow, modest, quiet order: 'Yes, she is a

good sort of soul, but plodding—too plodding. I like a little more dash in a teacher.' 'But how about her class,' asked the friend. 'O, her class is always full, and I believe, almost all her scholars have been converted.'"

What more, O foolish man, dost thou require? Are teachers for ornament, or for use? For hard campaign work, or for the dress parade of a gala-day? Beware how you undervalue these plain, practical, slow-going ones. They have the Master's work at heart, and in the end the fruit of their labor shall be seen to be fairer, richer, and more plentiful than that of the dashing ones--so much to your liking.

12. *Spasmodic Zeal*.—Plodding zeal is better than spasmodic zeal. You can count on it, but you never know when spasmodic zeal will burn out. It is the difference between a good solid stove thoroughly warmed for a long winter night with anthracite coal, and a sheet-iron stove red hot with a handful of shavings. How soon the red glare fades into darkness when the shavings are gone! And how soon they are gone! Give us the plodding tortoise every time rather than the over-confident frivolous hare.

13. *The Secret of Sustained Zeal and of Successful Work*.—There was a lady teacher in an obscure Sunday-school who was marvelously useful. Every member of three classes successively assigned to

her was hopefully converted through her instrumentality. Her gifts were not remarkable, and her success was not understood. By and by, she "was not, for God took her." Then they found a little diary which explained it all. In one place they found the following:—

"*Resolved*, That I will pray once each day for each member of my class by name."

Farther on they found this:—

"*Resolved*, That I will pray once each day for each member of my class by name, and agonize in prayer."

A little farther on they found these words:—

"*Resolved*, That I will pray once each day for each member of my class by name, and agonize in prayer, and expect a blessing."

Was it not now very plain to them all?

14. *All for Love*.—Love sustained the good woman and inspired her prayers—love for Christ and souls. Great is the power of love—greatest of all powers.

The northernmost of poets is the Rev. John Porlackson, in Balgysa, Iceland. Gifted as he is—if he be still living—he remained unknown until 1860, when he was seventy years old. Two German *literati* visited him, and brought back the story of his wonderful labors. His office as pastor brought him only fifteen dollars a year, so that he was obliged to support himself by working in the fields.

In his miserable hut of earth he had a study (!) eight feet long, six feet wide, and five feet high, the window measuring two square feet. Here he translated, during the long nights of winter, Klopstock's "Messiah," Milton's "Paradise Lost," and other German and English poems, with much good taste, into his mother tongue. All this he did out of pure love of poetry, and without hope of literary fame.

O that we were all willing to *so* work for Christ—out of pure love !

15. *Responsibility to God.*—Dinter, a Prussian school counselor, is reported to have said: "I promised God that I would look upon every Prussian peasant as a being who could complain of me before God if I did not provide for him the best education, as a man and a Christian, which it was possible for me to provide."

Just such a sense of responsibility to God ought we—parents, pastors, secular and Sabbath-school teachers—to feel in relation to the children who are under our care and influence. What strength, what zeal, what patience, such a sense of responsibility to God would bring us! We should work

"As ever in the great Task-master's eye."

16. *Patience and Persistence.*—Some are easily discouraged. This is unfortunate. It mars both their peace and their usefulness. John Wesley's mother was trying hard to teach one of her children. The

child was dull and heedless, and her efforts seemed to be in vain. Her husband, less patient than his matchless wife, wearied out in only watching the experiment, asked her, "How can you repeat that thing twenty times to that child?" Let us think on her wise answer and be ashamed to be impatient: "Because nineteen times are not enough." Besides, had she stopped at the nineteenth effort she would have lost the labor and time already expended.

17. *A Lesson for Pastors.*—The following very remarkable statement has been authoritatively made about the elder Dr. Tyng's Church in the city of New York:—

"More than fifty ministers have gone out from Dr. Tyng's Sunday-school, and among them are some of the most eminent ministers in the land."

Now, what is the explanation? Is it in the pastor, or the superintendent, or the Church? If it be said it is in the Church, or in the officers of the Sunday-school, the question comes up, How did Dr. Tyng develop such a Church, and call around him and train such colaborers? He has been asked for an explanation of his extraordinary success. His explanation is simple, and, as it seems to us, satisfactory; it explains the mystery and shows how we may all succeed: "*Personal attention to my Sabbath-school.*"

It is not genius, nor any peculiarities of method;

much less is it any sort of clap-trap manipulations. It is only "personal attention to my Sabbath-school." How much that tells! He understood the Sunday-school, its place and its value. It is on his heart. He plans for it, prays and works for it. Nay more, he is part of it, its very life and soul, as every pastor ought to be.

18. *Going through a Snow-storm.*—Some teachers feel very keenly Sunday cold, or snow, or rain, or heat. It seems to hurt more than any other sort. Dr. Tyng is not one of these, as it seems. One Sunday there was a terrific snow-storm, and nobody was seen on the streets. What did Dr. Tyng do? Went to his church. Whom did he meet? One poor girl, sixteen years old. What of her? Dr. Tyng, following the example of Jesus preaching to a solitary woman of the Samaritans at Jacob's well, talked the gospel to her. What was the result? She was converted, worked for others, was instrumental in the conversion of twenty-five of the young people of the Church—among them one of the pastor's sons.

Of Archbishop Leighton, it was said that "the Lord's day was his delight." One rainy Sabbath, when he was unwell, he persisted in attending church, and said, in excuse for his apparent rashness: "Were the weather fair I would stay at home; but since it is foul I must go, lest I be thought to countenance, by my example, the irreligious prac-

tice of letting trivial hinderances keep us back from public worship."

19. *Saving the Lost Lambs.*—These stories are very much, in spirit, like what we are told of Dr. Chalmers. When he occupied the chair of Philosophy in the College of St. Andrews, he used to gather in his house each Sabbath evening the poorest and most ignorant of the vagrant children of the neighborhood; and the biography relates that for that audience he prepared himself, pen in hand, as carefully as for his class in the university. So in wintry weather, though in the face of falling snow, he was often seen walking five miles to fill an appointment for worship with a little rustic congregation at Kilmany. And there, to the illiterate cottagers, he preached his best sermons.

20. *Helping People out of their Miseries.*—Some persons shrink from contact with the very poor and the very wicked. If we learn from Jesus how to work for the good of men, we will find that we are under very great obligations to those who need us most. Great in God's sight is the honor of such work, and great in God's sight will be its reward. Chalmers left a daughter like-minded with her good and great father. A reliable writer says: "In one of the alleys running off from Fountain Bridge, Edinburgh, a street crowded with drunkenness and pollution, is the low-roofed building in which this good woman is spending her life to help men and

women out of their miseries. Her chief work is with drunkards, their wives and daughters. . . . In the winter, when the nights are cold, you may see Helen Chalmers, with a lantern, going through the lanes of the city, hunting up the depraved, and bringing them out to her reform meetings. Insult her, do they? *Never*. They would as soon think of pelting the angel of God."

21. "*A Beautiful Field, Sir*."—Sometimes there is trouble in getting the right kind of teachers for our mission-schools in the cities. It is a great mistake to suppose that "any body" will do for such work. The trouble is, hardly any body will do. The greater the ignorance, poverty, wickedness, and degradation, the higher and finer the qualities of head and heart that are needed to elevate and save them. A passage in the life of Dr. Thomas Guthrie illustrates our thought, and brings out quite radiantly the Christ-spirit that was in the man. They had been trying a long time to get him to come from his sweet little parish at Arbirlot to a great church in Edinburgh. After much persuasion he agreed to go to Edinburgh, on a condition—that some will think strange, that some will not understand at all—on the express condition that he should, as soon as possible, be released from the "Old Gray Friars," and have a parish set up for him among the very poorest of the Scottish metropolis.

Let us take a glimpse at that field in which

Guthrie—"excavating the heathen," as one expressed it—took such delight. We quote from the "Autobiography and Memoirs of Guthrie:"—

"The Cowgate of Edinburgh, part of which was included in the parish of Old Gray Friars, lies along a shallow ravine, and its site often brought to Dr. Guthrie's mind the valley of the prophet's vision. The hand of the Lord had set him down, like Ezekiel, in the midst of the dry bones, and 'caused him to pass by them round about,' and the old question rang in his ears, 'Can these dry bones live?' The Edinburgh valley, where he labored, is spanned at one point by George Fourth's Bridge. Looking here through the open work of the railings, the stranger sees with surprise not flowing water, but a living stream of humanity in motion beneath his feet.

"It was there," writes Dr. Guthrie, "where one looks down on the street below, and on the foul, crowded streets that stretch, like ribs, down into the Cowgate, I stood on a gloomy day in the fall of the year '37. The streets were a puddle; the heavy air, loaded with smoke, was thick and murky; right below lay the narrow street of dingy tenements, whose toppling chimneys and patched and battered roofs were fit emblems of the fortunes of most of their tenants. Of these, some were lying over the sills of windows innocent of glass; others, coarse-looking women, with squalid children in their arms or at their feet, stood in groups at the close-mouths:

[the points where the alleys or closes enter the streets.] Here, with empty laughter, chaffing any passing acquaintance; there screaming each other down in drunken brawl, or standing sullen and silent, with hunger and ill-usage in their saddened looks. A brewer's cart, threatening to crush beneath its ponderous wheels the ragged urchins who had no other play-ground, rumbled over the causeway, drowning the quavering voice of one whose drooping head and scanty dress were ill in harmony with songs, but not drowning the shrill pipe of an Irish girl, who thumped the back of an unlucky donkey, and cried her herrings at 'three a penny.' So looked the parish I had come to cultivate; and while contrasting the scene below with the pleasant recollections of the parish I had just left—its singing larks, daisied pastures, decent peasants, and the grand blue sea rolling its lines of snowy breakers on the shore—my rather sad and somber meditations were somewhat suddenly checked. A hand was laid on my shoulder. I turned round to find Dr. Chalmers at my elbow.

"This great and good man knew that I had accepted an Edinburgh charge, mainly for the purpose of trying what the parochial or territorial system, fairly wrought, could do toward Christianizing the heathendom beneath our feet, and restoring the denizens of the Cowgate and its closes to sober, decent, and church-going habits. Contemplating

the field for a little in silence, all at once, with his broad Luther-like face glowing with enthusiasm, he raised his arm to exclaim, ‘A beautiful field, sir; a very beautiful field of operation!’”

21. *How the Water Comes Back.*—Such work for God no man can do without receiving in his own heart a rich reward. It is not merely in the satisfaction he has in trying to do good, but also in the personal growth in grace which such efforts to bless others foster and develop. It is a Bible principle that he that watereth shall himself be also watered; and our Saviour said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Guthrie found it so; on him and his the light shined “brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.” The Arabs have a pretty proverb that illustrates this idea. They say, “The water you pour on the roots of the cocoa-nut comes back to you, sweetened and enriched, in the milk from the top.”

22. *Use your Experience.*—What is the use of knowledge, of experience, unless we do some good with it? The best use of knowledge is the enlightenment of the ignorant; the best use of religion is the recovery of the wicked. Mr. Spurgeon has a good word of advice on this subject:—

“When an experienced Christian merely uses his experience for his own comfort, or as a standard by which to judge his fellow-Christians, or makes use of it for self-exaltation, as if he were infinitely superior to the most zealous young men, such a man

mars his talent, does mischief with it, and makes himself heavily responsible. I beseech you who have long walked in the way of godliness to use your experience continually in your visitations of the sick, in your conversations with the poor, in your meeting with young beginners, in your dealing with backsliders. Let your paths drop fatness; let the anointing oil God has given you fall upon those who are round about you."

23. *The Power of Prayer*.—Those who work for God in the midst of a wicked world must themselves be kept pure. Purity is as essential to their usefulness as to their personal salvation. The eloquent James Hamilton has a very beautiful passage on this point:—

"Among the forms of insect life, there is a little creature known to naturalists which can gather around itself a sufficiency of atmospheric air, and so clothed upon, it descends into the bottom of the pool, and you may see the little diver moving about dry, and at his ease, protected by his crystal vesture, though the water all around and about him be stagnant and bitter. Prayer is such a protection: a transparent vesture, the world sees it not—a real defense, it keeps out the world. By means of it, the believer can gather so much of heavenly atmosphere around him, and with it descend into the putrid depths of this contaminating world, that for a season no evil will touch him, and he knows when

to ascend for a new supply. Communion with God kept Daniel pure in Babylon."

24. *The Grace of Kindness.*—Frederick Robertson tells an incident in one of his letters that shows how we may do good every day, and perhaps every waking hour, if we only have a heart for it. He had been writing to a friend when a visitor was announced. After the visitor's departure he continued the letter by describing the interview. He says: "I have been interrupted by the visit of a lady of my congregation who came to take leave. She told me the delight, the tears of gratitude, which she had witnessed in a poor girl to whom, in passing, I gave a kind look in going out of church on Sunday. What a lesson! How cheaply happiness can be given! What opportunities we miss of doing an angel's work! I remember doing it, full of sad feelings, passing on, and thinking no more about it and it gave one hour's sunshine to a human life, and lightened the load of human life to a heart for a time."

25. *Life Transfigured.*—We all need the inspiration of broad views and noble thoughts to save us from despondency, worldliness, and selfishness. *Devotion to duty* redeems us from sordidness as nothing else can. Dr. Chapin has some fine thoughts on this subject. He says:—

"When a man finds at last that there is something beyond this life to live for, the moment that conception gets into his mind life is transfigured

and glorified into the nobler spheres of action. It becomes always glorious and fresh. Some men will tell you that life is tasteless, wearisome, and exhausting; in every case they are men who have tried to live in a narrow and selfish manner. Life is transfigured to every true, loving, brave, and diligent soul. Each man, faithful in his sphere, transfigures it, and makes grand the humblest position. We may say that the act of transfiguration takes place when a man realizes his own soul and its worth and work."

26. *The Ennobling Power of Duty Done.*—Harlan Page's motto was this: "I will try to do some good to every one I meet." This is the true spirit for all who labor in Christ's vineyard. This spirit improves all opportunities—great and small. It is faithful for Christ's sake. How it lifts a man up! How it educates—leads out and up into its noblest and divinest development—the spirit! We may be sure that—wherever else there may be darkness, and weakness, and death—there is true light, and power, and life in the soul that does its duty.

Professor Wilson—Christopher North—in "*Dies Boreales*," thus writes of duty: "The faculty of beauty lives, and in finite beings, which we are, life changes incessantly. The faculty of moral perception lives, and thereby it, too, changes for better and for worse. This is the divine law—at once encouraging and fearful—that obedience brightens the moral eyesight, sin darkens. Let all men know this,

and keep it in mind always, that a single narrowest, simplest *duty*, steadily practiced day after day, does more to support, and may do more to enlighten, the soul than a course of moral philosophy taught by a tongue which a soul compounded of Bacon, Spenser, Shakspeare, Homer, Demosthenes, and Burke, to say nothing of Socrates and Plato, could inspire."

27. *Filling our Sphere*.—"They tell in Europe," says Dr. W. M. Taylor, "of a poor man who was confined for many years in a cold, dark dungeon. There was but one aperture in the wall, and through that the sunbeams came for but a few minutes daily, making a bright spot on the opposite side of the cell. Often and often the lonely man looked upon that little patch of sunshine, and at length a purpose to improve it grew within his soul. Groping on the floor of his cell, he found a nail and a stone, and with these rude implements he set to work on the white portion of the wall for the few minutes of every day during which it was illuminated, until at length he succeeded in bringing out upon it a rude sculpture of Christ upon the cross. Let us imitate that prisoner. Circumscribed may be our sphere; dark, indeed, may be our daily lot; yet, if we love the Lord, and pray to him, and look for his direction, we shall discover some tiny chink through which the sunshine of his guiding Providence shall come. On the spot where its directing light shall fall, let us, with such means as we can

command, hew out, not in cold stone, but in living love, the likeness of the sacrifice of Christ. So shall we find our special sphere, and fill it to the commendation of the Master."

28. *Our Relation to each other.*—"For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: and those members of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need; but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked: that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one mem-

ber suffer, all the members suffer with it ; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, government, diversities of tongues." 1 Cor. xii, 14-28.

29. *The Spirit of true Christian Laborers.*—
"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge ; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind ; charity envieth not ; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil ; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth ; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth : but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail ; whether there be tongues, they shall cease ; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." 1 Cor. xiii, 1-8.

30. *Our Final Reward our Present Support.*—

“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was ahungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee ahungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” Matt. xxv, 31-40.

THE END.

PRESS NOTICES.

OUR CHILDREN

By ATTICUS G. HAYGOOD, D.D.,

President of Emory College.

12mo. 354 pages. Price, \$1 50. Postage paid.

NEW YORK: Nelson & Phillips.

MACON, GA.: J. W. Burke & Co.

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THE author, now President of Emory College, Oxford, Ga., was from 1870 to 1876 Sunday-School Secretary of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The first edition was exhausted in seven weeks after publication. This book has been most emphatically commended. The venerable Rev. LOVICK PIERCE, D.D., says in his Introduction:—

From a well-stored mind and an anxious heart the author offers in this work his observations and experience upon the best interests of our children for time and eternity, upon the obligations and duties of parents, and upon the opportunities and work of Sunday-school teachers. The principles, drawn as they are from the word of God, that are set forth in this volume, are, like the mariner's chart and compass, all important to safe navigation along the perilous coast of time.

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
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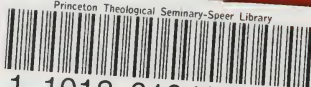
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